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A STUDY OF HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES IN CONSERVATIVE,
LIBERAL, AND NEO-ORTHODOX PROTESTANTISM

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Theology
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Theology

by
James Paul Miller

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To Dr. Delbert Rose and Dr. William Arnett for their assistance,
time, and patience, given to the writer of this paper. Also to the
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of this thesis.

Approved by:

Delbert R. Rose

William M. Arnett

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND PURPOSE AND DEFINITIONS

Today there are three main schools of theological thought. There is the school known commonly as orthodoxy, but more recently known as conservatism. Another school of theological thought is that of liberalism, also known as modernism. The most recently developed school of theological thought is that known as neo-orthodoxy, although it also has other titles assigned to it such as neo-supernaturalism, existentialism, crisis theology, and Barthianism. Actually, in many ways, neo-orthodoxy is a mixture of both orthodoxy and liberalism. Each of these three schools of theological thought have their own individual method of hermeneutics as applied to Scripture.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

Through a study of the exegetical results of each of these three groups of theological thought, it is quite evident that very frequently their interpretation of identical passages of Scripture drastically differ and at times are even diametrically opposed one to the other.

Limitation of the Problem

The problem involved is of a two-fold nature. Both can be adequately expressed in the form of two questions. The first question is, what is the basic reason for the differences in the exegetical results of these three schools of thought? The second question first needs to be stated in

the form of a proposition and then a question. The proposition is that all three schools mentioned cannot be applying correct methods of hermeneutics to the interpretation of Scripture, for the very reason that the exegetical results are frequently contrary to each other. Either all three schools have the wrong method of hermeneutics, or else only one of the three is correct. The question, then, is this--if they are not all three wrong, then which of the three theological schools is applying correct hermeneutical principles to Scripture, and upon what grounds can it be proven that this particular school's hermeneutical principles are the correct ones to apply to the interpretation of Scripture?

II. THE PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to show the basic reason for the differences between the three schools' exegetical results. The writer has made an attempt to prove that these differences result from the individual concept of Scripture held by each of these three theological positions. It is his contention that the concept each school holds of Scripture affects the hermeneutical principles that that school applies to the interpretation of the Bible.

An attempt has been made to establish the fact that there is a proper concept of Scripture which must be held if correct hermeneutical principles are to be applied to the interpretation of Scripture. The writer has arrived at what he considers to be the proper concept of Scripture, and has attempted to show that only one of the three stated theological views is holding this concept.

This paper has attempted to show which of the three views is maintaining the proper concept of Scripture, why the remaining two positions are not embracing a proper concept of Scripture, and how each of the three positions have applied their hermeneutical principles to interpret the Scriptures.

III. DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

There are certain terms used which must be properly defined and understood if one is to clearly understand the contents of this paper.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics, in relation to Scripture, refers to the act and method of interpreting the Bible. Louis Berkhof stated that it is the science that teaches the principles, laws, and methods of interpretation.¹

Exegesis

Hermeneutics and exegesis are distinguished one from the other. The difference between the two terms is that while hermeneutics refers to the rules of Biblical interpretation, exegesis refers to that which results from having applied the hermeneutical rules to the interpretation of Scripture. As used herein, hermeneutics refers to methods while exegesis refers to results and conclusions.

Conservatism

The expression conservatism, or conservative, is used of the

¹Louis Berkhof, Principles of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950, p. 54.

theological school of thought which accepts the traditional, orthodox view of the Christian faith. In the mind of this writer this school of theological thought is especially characterized by its adherence to the view that the Bible is the divinely inspired and infallible revelation of God, and that it and it alone is authoritative in matters of the Christian faith.

Liberalism

Liberalism is used as that school of theological thought which has refused to accept the Bible as the divinely inspired and infallibly revealed Word of God. It adheres to "destructive" higher criticism, and thus has freed itself from what it considers the narrow views of the traditional orthodox interpretation of Scripture and Christian faith.

Neo-Orthodoxy

This school of theological thought is assumed to be an amalgamation in many respects of both conservatism and liberalism. Neo-orthodoxy, however, takes sides with neither conservatism nor liberalism; instead it is in conflict with both schools of thought. In relation to hermeneutics neo-orthodoxy does not go as far to the left as does liberalism, nor as far to the right as does conservatism. While accepting much of the liberal "destructive" higher criticism of Scripture, neo-orthodoxy still maintains an element of divine revelation in relation to the Bible, though not the same idea of revelation which conservatism attaches to it. With liberalism, neo-orthodoxy maintains the Bible is a fallible book, while with conservatism, in its own individual way, it can view the Bible as being (or becoming) the Word of God.

"Destructive" Higher Criticism

Higher criticism is used in distinction from lower criticism. Lower criticism is an attempt, by a comparison of the many manuscripts available, to ascertain the true text of the Bible.

. . . By observation and experience, textual critics have arrived at certain canons by which to determine whether a reading is genuine and true to the original or autograph or, on the other hand, is an interpolation or scribal error (due to some physical infirmity of the scribe) or an intended change in order to alter the meaning of the original. By the application of their canons the textual critic is able to give us, except in a few cases still disputed, what was in the original Bible. Thus our Westcott-Hort's or Nestle's Greek Testament represents what was (except for possible a fraction of one per cent) in the original autographs. Textual criticism is a laudable science and the Christian Church is indebted to those who have spent their lives in an investigation of this subject. It has been on the side of true faith in that its constant effort has been to ascertain what were the ipsissima verba (the very words) of Scripture in the original manuscripts.²

Higher criticism is not to be confused with lower, or textual criticism. Whereas lower criticism confines itself to the Greek text, higher criticism deals with questions of authorship, time of writing, literary structure and contents. Used by liberalism higher criticism becomes "destructive" criticism in the sense that it is used to deny the actual historicity of many Biblical events, and to deny that certain named authors actually wrote the books ascribed to them, or it may be used to claim that supernatural events of Scripture are interpolations, and so forth.³

Revelation

Revelation is used as referring to the message which God, by the Holy

²Wick Broomall, Biblical Criticism (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957), p. 118.

³Ibid., pp. 143-180.

Spirit, has revealed to those whom He choose to receive His message. That which was revealed is the content of the Bible.

Inspiration

Inspiration refers to the supernatural influence the Holy Spirit had upon those men chosen to receive God's revelation. As a result of this influence the revelation they wrote is authoritative.

CHAPTER II

A PROPER CONCEPT OF SCRIPTURE AND HERMENEUTICS

There is a definite correlation between the concept of Scripture which an exegete holds and the hermeneutical principles which he will apply to the interpretation of the Bible.

I. NEED OF A PROPER CONCEPT OF SCRIPTURE FOR CORRECT BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES

The concept of the Bible which an interpreter holds will largely determine the hermeneutical principles which he shall apply to the interpretation of Scripture. This fact is realized even by those who do not maintain a high orthodox view of Scripture, such as Frederic W. Farrar, who in his book History of Interpretation frequently stresses his opinion that the interpreter's beliefs about the nature of Scripture and its inspiration will largely determine his methods of interpretation.¹ This is, in general, the view of conservative scholars also. It is the opinion of G.H. Schodde that the principles one employs in interpreting Scripture will be in harmony with what he believes about their origin, character, history, and so forth.²

II. THREE MAIN THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS OF THE BIBLE

Each of the three main schools of today's theology, conservatism,

¹Carl F.H. Henry, (ed.), Revelation and the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), p. 293.

²G.H. Schodde, "Interpretation," The International Standard Bible

liberalism, and neo-orthodoxy, have their own individual concept of the Bible. Each school's view is briefly discussed in the following paragraphs. They are more fully treated later on in this paper.

The Conservative Concept of the Bible

Conservative theologians conceive the Scriptures as being the authoritative, divinely revealed and inspired Word of God, and as such it is an infallible and inerrant revelation from God. In interpreting the Bible the conservative scholar labors within bounds which are erected by the conservative views of revelation and Scripture.³ The resultant hermeneutical principles of the conservative scholar are in alignment with his high traditional and orthodox concept of the Scriptures.

The Liberal Concept of the Bible

Liberal theologians do not hold to the absolute authoritativeness of the Bible as do conservative theologians. Consequently liberalism does not consider the Bible to be an infallible and divinely inspired revelation from God. The seat of authority for liberalism, not being in the Bible, has been placed within the bounds of reason and experience. Essentially liberalism is a system of rationalism. Its criteria for truth is lodged, not in Scriptural teaching, but in human reasoning, experience, and private opinion. Whatever in the Bible does not measure up to the standards of its own judgments may be rejected as the Word of God by liberalism.

Encyclopaedia (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), III, 1489-1490.

³Carl F.H. Henry, (ed.), Contemporary Evangelical Thought (Great Neck, New York: Channel Press, 1957), p. 66.

has been free to accept or reject whatever of the Biblical record it has desired. Under its treatment Christianity has been regarded as a way of living, and not as a creed. Doctrines were dismissed as being unimportant.⁴ Thus, revelation having no doctrinal significance, liberalism was free to treat the Scripture in whatever manner it pleased. Its exegetical fruits show that its view of Scripture became the standard for its hermeneutical principles.

The Neo-Orthodox Concept of the Bible

As the hermeneutical principles and exegetical results of both conservatism and liberalism are in keeping with their individual concept of the Bible, the same must be said to apply to neo-orthodoxy. Retaining much of the "destructive" higher criticism of liberalism, neo-orthodoxy is also delivered from an infallible, divinely revealed view of the Bible, and thus an authoritative Bible. Equating as they do revelation with divine acts rather than with revealed propositions of the Bible, they are freed from a doctrinal interpretation of the Scriptures. In place of a system of interpretation based on an infallible and authoritative Bible, neo-orthodoxy has a mythological system of hermeneutics and interprets the Bible symbolically.⁵

". . . The Bible contains symbols which unfold a religious history . . . which is normatively true for all men who existentially interact with

⁴Carl F.H. Henry, The Protestant Dilemma (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), p. 46.

⁵Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Boston: W.A. Wilde Company, 1950), p. 43.

it. . . ."⁶ A reading of neo-orthodox theologians such as Reinhold Niebuhr, Emil Brunner, or Karl Barth, is convincing proof that the view they hold of the Bible largely determines their hermeneutical principles and exegetical results.

Schoode adequately summed up the idea under discussion when he said that ". . . in modern times . . . the exegetical methods of different interpreters are chiefly controlled by their views as to the origin and character of the Scriptural books . . ."⁷

III. THREE THEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS AND THE PROPER CONCEPT OF THE BIBLE

As has been briefly shown, neither the conservative view, nor the liberal view, nor the neo-orthodox view of Scripture are the same. Ironically, however, each of these three divisions of theological thought profess to hold the correct and proper concept of the Bible.

Conservative scholars, maintaining the Bible to be an infallible and divinely revealed book, believe their concept of the Bible to be the correct one. It is the conservative contention that the Bible teaches the concept which is held by conservative theologians. Liberal theologians, relying on reason and experience, believe higher criticism has shown them that the Bible is not an infallible record of divine revelation, and therefore not a book of final authority in doctrine or morals. Liberalism has maintained

⁶Ibid., p. 44.

⁷Schoode, op. cit., p. 1490.

that this view is the proper concept of the Bible. Neo-orthodoxy, which has maintained that the Bible is not the Word of God, but can "become" the Word of God in a divine-human encounter, has maintained that Scripture is written largely in the form of myth, and has an existential meaning. This, it has been persuaded, is the true concept of the Bible.

The exegetical gaps between these three schools of theological thought are far too wide to believe that each has the proper concept of Scripture. The dissimilarities are too divergent rationally to believe that these views even have the same basic idea or ideas in their concepts of the Bible. Therefore one of two things must be true. Either none of the three views maintain the proper concept of the Bible, or else only one of the three views maintains this concept.

IV. A PROPER CONCEPT OF THE BIBLE AND CORRECT HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES

As previously stated, it is generally agreed by theologians that the concept one holds of Scripture will largely determine the hermeneutical principles which shall be applied to the interpretation of Scripture. On the basis of this fact then it is only logical to assume that to apply correct hermeneutical methods and principles to Scripture the interpreter must first possess a correct and proper concept of the Bible. This fact, of course, presupposes that there is first of all a correct concept of the Bible. However, before establishing what the writer considers to be the correct concept of Scripture, and upon what basis he considers such a claim to be possible, one very important fact must be pointed out about the relationship of the application of correct hermeneutical principles of

Scripture and their exegetical results.

V. PROPER HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES AND EXEGETICAL RESULTS

The application of correct hermeneutical methods to the interpretation of Scripture should guarantee correct exegetical results. This generally is the case; however, this does not always assure correct exegesis of Scripture. The following paragraphs state why this is true.

. . . In any system of interpretation there are strong personal and psychological predisposing factors that greatly influence the interpreter; e.g., the school or schools the interpreter attended, the ministers he has heard, and the books he has read. . . .⁸

. . . In the nature of the case the dogmatical stand of the interpreter will materially influence his hermeneutics and exegesis. In the legitimate sense of the term, every interpreter of the Bible is "prejudiced," i.e., is guided by certain principles which he holds antecedently to his work of interpretation. . . .⁹

There is another reason why even the application of correct hermeneutical methods to the interpretation of Scripture does not always assure correct exegetical results. Samuel Davidson mentioned this factor when he stated that it is the improper use of reason which results in different exegetical results.¹⁰ Ramm is in basic agreement with Davidson, and has stated three reasons why Spirit-guided men can arrive at different interpretations. He has declared:

⁸Ramm, op. cit., p. 156. ⁹Schodde, op. cit., p. 1489.

¹⁰Samuel Davidson, Sacred Hermeneutics Developed and Applied Including A History of Biblical Interpretation From the Earliest of the Fathers to the Reformation (Edinburgh: Thomas Clark, MDCCCXLIII), pp. 44-45.

. . . First the Holy Spirit gives nobody infallible interpretations. Second, piety is a help to interpretation, but it is not the substitute for study, knowledge, intelligence, nor information. Third, all of us are still in the human body and subject to its limitations, mental frailties, and limited vision of soul and mind. . . .¹¹

However, the above truths do not in anyway alter the contention of this writer that a proper concept of the Bible will result in correct hermeneutical methods and principles. The problem is, how can the proper concept of the Bible be determined?

VI. AN ADEQUATE STANDARD AND THE PROPER CONCEPT OF THE BIBLE

In order to determine what the proper concept of the Bible is, there must be an adequate standard upon which such a judgment can be made.

The Standard for the Proper Concept of Scripture

This writer is of the opinion that there is a standard which can and does determine the proper concept one should have of the Bible. It is his contention that this standard is found within the Bible itself.

There are two reasons why the Bible itself should be the standard. The first is that it discloses truths from God Himself which otherwise could not be discovered.¹² The second reason is that the Bible is the object of sacred hermeneutics, and as the object it should be allowed to witness in its own defense. Its own merits should be the objective standard which shall be the means of judging what is its proper concept. This is but

¹¹Ramm, op. cit., p. 61.

¹²Henry, Revelation and the Bible, op. cit., p. 108.

allowing the Scriptures to give expression and testimony to their own character, to what they actually are.

Some will certainly raise the objection that Scripture ought not thus be appealed to for its own vindication. To quote Scripture in support of Scripture seems, admittedly, from one standpoint, to be arguing in a circle, and to be logically inconclusive. It is important, therefore, to see that in this particular case no occasion exists for such misgivings.

(1) First, let us recognize that every man has surely a right to speak for himself; and that testimony to oneself ought not to be ruled out as completely improper. . . .

(2) Not only so, but some truths about people may never be known, unless the individuals concerned themselves bear witness to them. If what they thus say is unreliable, no other means of discovering the truth may exist. Somewhat similarly, the Bible discloses from God himself truths which cannot otherwise be discovered. . . .

(3) In the third place, if we believe that the Bible not only claims to be, but is, a book from God, then behind and beyond all its human writers and contributing agents God himself must be acknowledged as its author; and God cannot lie. His word is always true and always trustworthy. The Bible's witness to itself ought, therefore, to be treated as authoritative and decisive; in a very real sense we need none other.

(4) When men wish to confirm witness given about themselves they appeal to one greater; they take an oath and swear by almighty God. Similarly, when God wished to make men doubly sure of his work of promise, he confirmed it by an oath. But when he came to swear, since there was none greater by whom he could swear, he swore by himself (cf. Heb. 6:13-18). He thus made himself the guarantor of the truth and trustworthiness of his own word. . . . if the Bible is from God, and therefore possesses supreme authority among men in what it says, it cannot be other than self-authenticating. Truth is settled by what it says, rather than by what others may say about it, or in criticism of it.

(5) Finally, relief from the possible embarrassment of dependence upon a single witness—and that in this case the witness of Scripture to itself—is provided by the Trinity and the eternity of the Godhead. For God is Three in One; and God still speaks. So the truth and trustworthiness of Scripture, as the authoritative and unbreakable divine word, are confirmed to the Christian believer by the witness during this earthly life of the incarnate Son of God, and by the present continuing witness of the illuminating and indwelling Spirit of God.¹³

¹³Henry, Revelation and the Bible, op. cit., pp. 108-109.

Witness of Scripture to Itself

What is the witness of Scripture to itself as concerns its nature and character? Does it profess to be of such a nature that it should be accepted as an authoritative source from God to man? Even Farrar, who did not hold to a high, conservative view of the Scriptures, can be quoted as saying that ". . . if the Bible as a whole possess a divine authority that authority must rest on its inherent nature and its actual phenomena, not on the theories and inventions of men respecting it. . . ." ¹⁴

The Bible, then, must speak for itself as to whether its nature and character possesses divine authority. It is in this manner that Scripture itself gives the correct concept of itself. What, then, have the Scriptures to say about themselves?

Scripture as God's revelation. It has not been, at this point, the object of the writer to engage in a theological discussion of the doctrine of revelation. The object has been to state concisely that the contents of Scripture declare themselves to be God's revelation given to man from God Himself.

In many instances God is explicitly declared as being the author of the Bible. Both Old Testament and New Testament writers spoke as if what they had said and written were not their own words, but were God's words, or his revelation.

¹⁴Frederic W. Farrar, History of Interpretation (New York: E. J. Dutton and Co., 1886), pp. xxv-xxvi.

. . . the Scriptures themselves represent the Scriptures as not merely containing here and there the record of revelation—"words of God" . . . given by God, but as themselves, in all their extent, a revelation, an authoritative body of gracious instructions from God . . .¹⁵

Regardless of whether one be of the liberal theological persuasion, or the neo-orthodox view, or the conservative position, it must be admitted that Biblical writers, in many instances, refer to what they say as being God's words and not theirs, a "thus saith the Lord," and that the author of their thoughts is God and not themselves. The writers of Scripture contend that Scripture itself is God's revelation to man and through man.

Scripture as revelation through inspiration. God's revelation given to man involves the doctrine of inspiration. As it was not the intention of the writer to discuss fully the doctrine of revelation, so it was not his intention to treat thoroughly the doctrine of inspiration. The object has been to show that Scriptures do witness to being divinely inspired, and therefore because of this inherent nature or concept of themselves, are on this basis to be considered as an infallible revelation from God. If the Scriptures teach that divine revelation was given to men by the means of divine inspiration, then it must be admitted that the Scripture's concept of itself is that it is an infallible revelation from God. Do the Scriptures teach that the writers of the Bible were inspired in such a manner that they were enabled to receive an authoritative and infallible revelation from God?

Scripture as God breathed. Alan M. Stibbs stated this biblical

¹⁵Benjamin B. Warfield, "Revelation," The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), IV, 2582.

truth when he said that:

. . . in II Timothy 3:16, "All scripture is inspired by God" (RSV) . . . means literally "God breathed," i.e., "inspired of God." . . . It asserts that the writing is a product of the creative activity of the divine breath. The word thus goes right back to the beginning or first cause of the emergence of Scripture, and indicates that Scripture . . . owes its very existence to the direct creative activity of God Himself. Although men wrote it, it is God who brought it into being.¹⁶

The inspiration of Scripture here spoken of relates to both the Old and the New Testaments.

New Testament and the divine authority of the Old Testament. Roger Nicole has pointed out that from the beginning of the New Testament to the end, the authors ascribe unqualified authority to the Old Testament Scripture.¹⁷ At least fifty-six times the New Testament quotes the Old Testament as if God is the speaker in the quote, though the quotation recorded in the Old Testament is not a saying of God as such, but the word of Scripture itself (Matt. 19:5; Acts 4:25; 13:35; Heb. 1:5-8, 13; 3:7; 4:4).¹⁸ The writers of the New Testament gave witness to complete confidence in the authority of the Old Testament. Often they illustrated or supported some particular truth through quoting passages of Scripture from various Old Testament books, and by doing so revealed their conviction that the books of the Old Testament were of equal divine authority.¹⁹ Never were the quotations doubted or argued, but were accepted as revealed truth. This is an important fact, for ". . . one verse in 22.5 of the New Testament is a

¹⁶ Henry, Revelation and the Bible, op. cit., p. 109.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 138. ¹⁸ Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁹ Louis Berkhof, Principles of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950), p. 54.

quotation."²⁰ The Old Testament was considered authoritative.

Ernest F. Kevan stated that ". . . it seems possible to classify the New Testament use of the Old in a fourfold way: the historical, the propositional, the homological, and the illustrational."²¹ Berkhof was in basic agreement with this classification.²²

By the historical usage of Old Testament quotes is meant the way in which the New Testament frequently refers to things and events of the Old Testament in such a manner that their historicity is taken for granted and not disputed. Over one-hundred Old Testament events are alluded to in the New Testament. This use of the Old Testament witnesses to the New Testament's belief that it was literally true and reliable history. The Biblical events of the Old Testament are regarded as having occurred and as having taken place in the manner described.²³

As for the propositional use of the Old Testament, it is evident that there are various doctrines set forth in the New Testament which are dependent on the Old Testament for authority. The book of Romans is an example of this principle, for in it are viewed many cornerstone doctrines of our faith that are grounded on the Old Testament for their authority. Therefore, though there are distinctive doctrines and truths revealed in the New Testament which we do not find in the Old Testament, it is an undeniable fact that many of the New Testament doctrines are but the development

²⁰ Henry, Revelation and the Bible, op. cit., p. 137.

²¹ Ibid., p. 285. ²² Berkhof, op. cit., p. 163.

²³ Henry, Revelation and the Bible, op. cit., pp. 285-286.

and completion of doctrines begun in the Old Testament. The New Testament concept of the covenant, developed in the book of Hebrews, certainly is a completion of the covenant concept begun in the Old Testament. Statements made in the Old Testament are thus regarded by the New as authoritative for the proof of doctrine.²⁴

The homological use of the Old Testament is that of type and antitype, the type being found in the Old Testament and the antitype found in the New Testament. Kevan believed that this is the unifying principle of interpretation, as it binds the two dispensations together.²⁵ Ramm listed six kinds of symbols used in the Old Testament which have antitypes in the New Testament. These six symbols are (1) persons, (2) institutions, (3) offices, (4) events, (5) actions, and (6) things.²⁶

The New Testament also uses the Old Testament in an illustrative manner, that is, to make clear a particular truth and also for moral enlightenment.

Christ's and the Old Testament. The Bible of Jesus' day was the Old Testament. It was this book to which He again and again referred. It was not this writer's intention to show the various instances and ways in which Christ used the Old Testament. The purpose instead was to show the attitude He exhibited toward the Old Testament which revealed that for Him it was authoritative.

Clive Thexton stated Christ's attitude towards the Old Testament when

²⁴Ibid., p. 286.

²⁵Ibid., p. 295.

²⁶Ramm, op. cit., p. 147.

he said that ". . . practically every aspect of our Lord's work and teaching is in some way related to His use of the Old Testament . . ."²⁷

At the very beginning of His ministry when Christ was confronted by Satan, He employed Scripture from the Old Testament in such a way which indicated His positive acceptance of the Old Testament as the Word of God. This practice was consistent throughout His entire ministry.

. . . He quoted the Old Testament in support of his teaching to the crowds; he quoted it in his discussions with antagonistic Jews; he quoted it in answer to questions both captious and sincere; he quoted it in instructing the disciples who would have readily accepted his teaching on his own authority; he quoted it on the cross, when his sufferings could easily have drawn his attention elsewhere; he quoted it in his resurrection glory, when any limitation, real or alleged, of the days of his flesh was clearly superseded. Whatever may be the differences between the pictures of Jesus drawn by the four Gospels, they certainly agree in their representation of our Lord's attitude toward the Old Testament: one of constant use and unquestioning endorsement of its authority.²⁸

The attitude of Christ towards the Old Testament was further seen by His belief in the inspiration of Scripture since the time of Adam (Matthew 19:5). Further, He believed that the oracles he uttered to His disciples were infallible (Matthew 13:14-15; 15:7-9). He believed in creation by God, and in the literal existence of Adam and Eve (Matthew 19:4), and other characters and historical facts of Scripture (Matthew 24:37-39; Luke 17:28-30, 32; John 6:31-33, 48-51). Christ even went so far as to believe in the literal and historical story concerning Jonah and the great fish (Matthew 12:39-41; 16:4; Luke 11:32). There can be little doubt, from

²⁷ Clive Thexton, "Jesus's Use of the Scriptures," The London Quarterly and Holburn Review (April, 1954), p. 107.

²⁸ Henry, Revelation and the Bible, op. cit., pp. 140-141.

Biblical evidence, that Christ accepted the Old Testament in its entirety as possessing divine authority and being God's revelation.²⁹

Inspiration of the New Testament. The inspiration of Scripture is not limited to the Old Testament. Not only did the New Testament writers give testimony to the inspiration of the Old Testament, but also extended the same confidence to the inspiration to the New Testament.

Benjamin B. Warfield, in his book entitled The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible, has very ably treated the matter at hand. He stated that the New Testament writers themselves were fully confident that they spoke "by the Holy Spirit" (I Peter 1:12), and attributed both the matter and form of their teaching to Him (I Corinthians 2:13). The writers made it a test of whether one has the Spirit by whether or not he should recognize what they demanded as being commandments of God (I Corinthians 14:37). By their attitude towards their own teaching, both oral and written, these writers claimed the same "inspiration" which they had attributed to the writers of the Old Testament.

Warfield further stated that all doubt should be alleviated when it is observed that the New Testament writers placed the writings of one another in the same category of "Scripture" with the books of the Old Testament. For examples of this Warfield cited the Apostles Paul and Peter.

. . . The same Paul who, in 2 Tim. iii. 16, declared that 'every' or 'all scripture is God-breathed' had already written in I Tim. v. 18: "For the scripture saith, Thou shall not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his hire." The first clause here is derived from Deuteronomy and the second from the Gospel of Luke, though both are cited as together constituting, or better, forming part

²⁹Ibid., 133-134.

of the "Scripture" which Paul adduces as so authoritative as by its mere citation to end all strife. Who shall say that, in the declaration of the later epistle that "all" or "every" Scripture is God-breathed, Paul did not have Luke, and, along with Luke, whatever other new books he classed with the old under the name of Scripture, in the back of his mind, along with those old books which Timothy had had in his hands from infancy. And the same Peter who declared that every "prophecy of scripture" was the product of men who spoke "from God," being 'borne' by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1. 21), in this same epistle (iii. 16), places Paul's Epistles in the category of Scripture along with whatever other books deserve that name. For Paul, says he, wrote these epistles, not out of his own wisdom, but 'according to the wisdom given to him.' . . .³⁰

The conclusion to which Warfield arrived was that there is no pressure applied on the witness of the New Testament writers in saying that the inspiration of Scripture which they spoke of covered the entire body of "Scripture," the new books which they themselves were putting forth and adding to the body of the old, as well as the Old Testament itself which they had received from the fathers.³¹

The Scriptural Concept of itself as the Word of God.

As previously stated, the only objective standard for determining what the proper concept of Scripture should be is Scripture itself. Therefore it was investigated above, briefly and concisely, what the inherent teaching within Scripture is as to its own nature and character. It was stated that its own concept of itself should be the view adopted as the proper belief about Scripture. It was further stated that, because one's view of Scripture will largely determine his hermeneutical principles he shall apply to the interpretation of the Bible, one should have the proper

³⁰ Benjamin B. Warfield, The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1948), pp. 163-165.

³¹ Ibid., p. 165.

concept of Scripture if he is to have correct hermeneutical principles. Therefore, to have such hermeneutical principles, on the basis of this study, one must adopt the Scripture's teaching about itself. This study has shown this teaching to be that both the Old and New Testaments have God as their author, and although written by men under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are the divinely revealed Word of God. This is the biblical doctrine as to its own authoritativeness, and, as Alan M. Stibbs has pointed out, we have no justification for accepting and believing other doctrines the Scriptures present ". . . if we cannot equally rely completely on what the Bible teaches about itself. . . ."32

The Bible is divinely inspired—that is the one great principle that controls Hermeneutica Sacra. It cannot be ignored with impunity. Any theory of interpretation that dis-regards it, is fundamentally deficient, and will not be conducive to our understanding of the Bible as the Word of God.³³

Conservative View of Scripture and the Scriptural Concept of Itself

As previously stated, all three views of theological thought profess to have the proper concept of Scripture. Therefore a study was made to determine exactly what the proper concept of Scripture should be, according to Scripture itself. This was done by examining the scriptural teaching as to its own nature and character. It was determined that whatever the Bible stated about itself would be the correct view, or proper concept, of itself. Now the question at hand is this, which of the three, if any, maintain a view of Scripture which is the Biblical teaching about itself? Due to their

³²Henry, Revelation and the Bible, op. cit., p. 108.

³³Berkhof, op. cit., p. 42.

divergent views about the Bible only one of the three could possibly possess the correct teaching about the nature and character of Scripture. Does one of the three positions maintain the Biblical view about itself?

As stated, liberalism exalts reason and experience as the means of arriving at truth, and in so doing does not hold to an authoritative Bible. To them the Bible is not divinely inspired, but is an erroneous and therefore fallible book. This certainly is not the Biblical view of itself, and on this basis liberalism must be rejected as maintaining a scriptural view of the Bible, which alone is the proper concept. Neo-orthodoxy, which accepts much of the liberal higher destructive criticism of the Scripture, rejects the Bible as being itself revelation, maintaining instead that the Scriptures are rather a record of revelation, not revelation themselves. Therefore it can be seen that on these grounds neo-orthodoxy also fails to embrace the Biblical view of its own nature and character.

Conservatism, however, accepts the Bible as being God's infallibly revealed Word. A study of the conservative doctrines of revelation and inspiration reveals that this school of theological thought embraces the Biblical doctrine of its own nature and character. Therefore it can be fairly stated that, on the basis of its acceptance of the scriptural concept of itself, the conservative view has the proper concept of the Bible, as it is the only one of the three schools which accepts the Biblical view. As stated, it is this writer's contention that the ideas one holds about the nature and character of the Bible will largely determine one's hermeneutical principles. The natural logic of this argument would be then that an improperly conceived Bible would produce hermeneutical principles which themselves would be improper. The reverse is also true, that a properly conceived Bible

would produce proper or correct hermeneutical principles. It follows then, that the conservative view, embracing as it does the Biblical teaching about its nature and character, will have, in general at least, proper hermeneutical principles.

CHAPTER III

HISTORY OF HERMENEUTICS

The treatment of this division has followed the outline which Frederic W. Farrar used in his book entitled History of Interpretation. The reasons for following this procedure have been these: first of all Farrar was an authority in this area of hermeneutics, and was therefore worthy of imitation. The second reason has been that others who have dealt with the history of hermeneutics have, in general, followed such a division, though none have as clearly defined the boundaries as did Farrar.

I. HISTORY DIVIDED INTO SEVEN PERIODS

The seven periods which have been treated are, first, the Rabbinic period which lasted roughly for 1000 years, from the days of Ezra (B.C.457) to those of Rab Abina (A.D. 498). The second was the Alexandrian, from Aristobulus (B.C. 180) to the death of Philo (A.D. 40), which was continued in the Christian Schools of Alexandria, from Pantaenus (A.D. 200) down to Pierius. The third period was that of the Patristic, which lasted from the time of Clement of Rome (A.D. 95) through the Dark Ages to the Glossa Interlinearis of Anselm of Laon (A.D. 1117). The Scholastic period was the fourth, and lasted from the days of Abelard (A.D. 1142) to the Reformation. The fifth period was that of the Reformation of the Sixteenth century. The sixth period, that of the Post-Reformation, continued until the middle of the eighteenth century. The last period is that of the Modern Epoch, which runs from the end of the Post-Reformation period to

to the present moment.¹

There is a purpose in studying the history of Biblical hermeneutics. Milton S. Terry plainly stated the value of such a study in the following paragraph.

. . . It serves to guard against errors and exhibits the activity and efforts of the human mind in its search after truth and in relation to noblest themes. It shows what influences have led to the misunderstanding of God's word, and how acute minds, carried away by a misconception of the nature of the Bible, have sought mystic and manifold meanings in its contents. . . . The student who acquaints himself with the various methods of exposition, and with the works of the great exegetes of ancient and modern times, is often saved thereby from following new developments of error, and is guarded against the novelties of a restless fancy. He observes how learned men, yielding to subtle speculation and fanciful analogies, have become the founders of schools and systems of interpretation. At the same time he becomes more fully qualified to maintain and defend the faith once delivered to the saints.²

The Rabbinic Period

The interpretation of Scripture according to Farrar did not begin before the days of Ezra. It is not known how much of the Old Testament, as we now have it, was known to the mass of Jewish people before his time.³ Ezra, Farrar believed, was the first to have begun the interpretation of Scripture. Scripture itself recorded this event in Ezra 7:10, where it is stated that he "prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord." The verb "seek" means to "investigate," and when used in connection with the Bible

¹Frederic W. Farrar, History of Interpretation (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1886), p. 12.

²Milton S. Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1911), pp. 31-32.

³Farrar, op. cit., pp. 47-48. Some might date the beginning earlier, as for example, the school of the prophets.

it meant to search out, to examine, and thus determine its meaning. This reference to Ezra is the earliest of Scriptural exegesis, and its history begins from his activity.⁴

Ezra exalted the Pentateuch, and through his influence this group of books soon became the object of interpretation by two institutions which soon arose in Israel, the synagogue and the academy. Here the Pentateuch and the prophets were read, expounded, and taught. By this manner exegesis became first a matter of oral instruction and oral tradition. It was several centuries before exegesis was committed to written literature.⁵

The main exegetical concern of this period centered around the law. It became an area of such legal strictness as was never before known.⁶ But the law which was exalted was not the written law of the Scriptures, but the oral law of tradition, which was an interpretation of the written law. This was the outcome of the synagogue and academy teaching.

It was four centuries before the oral law was put into written form. This was done by Rabbi Juda. His compilation was called the "Mishna," which means "learning" or "repetition." It was this compilation of human tradition, which was a far departure from plain Scriptural teaching, which began moulding the entire theology and philosophy of Judaism.⁷ It was this Mishna, with the Gemara, which composed the Babylonian Talmud. Without these two books, which equal the Talmud, the Jews held that it would be impossible to

⁴J.F. McCurdy, "Bible Exegesis," The Jewish Encyclopedia (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1902), III, 162.

⁵Ibid., p. 162. ⁶Farrar, op. cit., p. 54. ⁷Ibid., pp. 79-80.

understand the law, as it would be valueless.⁸ Thus the law was hedged about with all sorts of human tradition. The written law was practically set aside.

. . . The Oral Law was first exalted as a necessary supplement to the Written Law; then substituted in the place of it . . . and finally identified with the inferences of the Rabbis. The Pentateuch was disparaged in comparison with the Mishna, the Mishna in comparison with the voluminous expansions of the Gemara. Supported by the False Decretals of Judaism which asserted that the Oral Law had been handed down by Mosaic succession through a chain of recipients, the Scribes proceeded to make disobedience to their decisions more perilous than disobedience to a moral commandment. . . .

In building a wall of human tradition about the Scriptures, it is not difficult to imagine that various means were devised to avoid the literal and plain teaching of Scripture. That such was done can partly be seen by the indefinite development of rules which were made to meet every objection which might possibly be raised in opposition to a strict legalistic method of interpreting the Scriptures.¹⁰ There was an exaltation of the letter of the law in place of the spirit of the law. This method delighted in searching out all the latent meanings possible in Scripture, and finding mysterious meanings which a literal, grammatico-historical interpretation could not possibly produce. For instance, special mystic value was attached to names; mystic relations were established between different conceptions, which were based on the numerical value of letters by which they are expressed; letters were used to stand for words, and words were formed by the combination of initial and terminal letters, or each letter of a word might have been regarded as the initial letter of other words, or new meanings might be made by an interchange of letters. Besides such methods there were others,

⁸Ibid., p. 82.

⁹Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 87.

one of the outstanding being that of altering the words of the text into other words which resembled them.¹¹

It is not difficult to see the erroneous principles of interpretation which prevailed during that period. The main error was the substitution of human tradition, the exegesis of the Old Testament as found in the Targums, the Talmud, and the Midrashim, for the plain and obvious literal truth as found in the Scripture. This method of exegesis brought into being thousands of wierd, fantastic and nonsensical interpretations, and in doing so hid the true meaning of Scripture.¹² Authority rested in tradition and human beings such as the Rabbis rather than the Word of God. The oral law set the written law aside. It became possible to make the Scriptures say exactly what the interpreter wished, and deduce from the Scripture what was not contained therein. It was also possible to reject historical circumstances which threw the Jewish nation in an unfavorable light, and make gross substitutions which presented Israel in a flawless, sinless light.¹³

The Alexandrian Period

The dispersed Jews in Alexandria, that great metropolis in which could be found various religious beliefs and diverse philosophies, came under the advancing tide of Hellenic influences. Alexandria was one of the main areas in which the Jewish religion contacted Greek philosophy. At the beginning

¹¹Ibid., pp. 97-104.

¹²Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Boston: W.A. Wilde Company, 1950), pp. 28-29.

¹³Farrar, op. cit., p. 63.

of the third century A.D. Jewish exegetes began applying their newly found philosophy to the interpretation of Scripture.¹⁴ The system of hermeneutics which developed was the allegorical, which was an attempt to harmonize Greek philosophy with Jewish legislation.¹⁵ The influence of this school of interpretation dominated the church up to the time of the Reformation.¹⁶

Three outstanding figures of this period were Philo, Clement of Alexandria and his disciple, Origen. Philo's works are largely the development of the principles of the Allegorists. He was the most distinguished advocate of the allegoric method of interpretation.¹⁷ To Philo the literal sense of the Scripture was subordinated to what he considered the correct method of interpretation, which was the allegorical. He believed the literal sense only developed an elemental faith, while the allegorical lead to matured faith and true knowledge. By his method of interpretation complete perversion of Scripture resulted.¹⁸ Berkhof claimed that the chief representatives of this school were Clement of Alexandria and Origen.¹⁹ Clement was the first to extend the allegorising system to the New Testament.²⁰ The principle which he propounded and operated on was that all Scripture must be understood allegorically. Origen furthered the allegorical method

¹⁴Louis Berkhof, Principles of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950), p. 19.

¹⁵Farrar, op. cit., p. 131.

¹⁶Ramm, op. cit., p. 23.

¹⁷Samuel Davidson, Sacred Hermeneutics Developed and Applied Including A History of Biblical Interpretation From the Earliest of the Fathers to the Reformation (Edinburgh: Thomas Clark, MDCCCXLIII), p. 64.

¹⁸Farrar, op. cit., p. 139.

¹⁹Berkhof, op. cit., p. 19.

²⁰Davidson, op. cit., p. 77.

by his belief that Scripture had a three-fold sense, the literal, the moral, and the mystical or allegorical. He disparaged the literal sense, seldom used the moral, and always used the allegorical.²¹

In the allegoric method of this period there was an effort to find the hidden sense of Scripture, and to this end all else was to be subordinated. The basic principles which this period of interpretation operated on, given by Philo in his books on dreams and as stated by Farrar, are as follows:

. . . Negatively he says that the literal sense must be excluded when anything is stated which is unworthy of God;—when otherwise a contradiction would be involved;—and when Scripture itself allegorises. Positively the text is to be allegorised when expressions are doubled; when superfluous words are used; when there is a repetition of facts already known; when an expression is varied; when synonyms are employed; when a play of words is possible in any of its varieties; when words admit of a slight alteration; when the expression is unusual; when there is anything abnormal in the number or tense. . . .²²

The search for a hidden, mystical sense within the Scripture was the main hermeneutical error of this period. The plain, direct teaching of the Bible was rejected in favor of a mystical sense. In the preceding period there was at least the control of the Targum, Midrashim, and Talmud exercised by the exegete upon Scripture. However, in allegorical interpretation there were no controls put upon the imagination of the interpreter, and he was free to interpret as he pleased. If anything was found in the Scripture which did not agree with the philosophy or sense of propriety of the interpreter, he was able to resort to allegorical interpretation.

The Patristic Period

This period was unable to escape the allegorical influence and was

²¹Berkhof, op. cit., p. 20.

²²Farrar, op. cit., p. 22.

the method adopted by the early Apostolic Fathers before the full formation of the New Testament Canon.²³ This widely prevalent Hellenistic influence went beyond the Apostolic Fathers and also reached the post-Apostolic Fathers.²⁴ Davidson stated that the majority of Fathers belonging to this period were allegorical interpreters.²⁵ During this whole period, according to Farrar, the views held about the Old Testament and how it was to be interpreted were largely those teachings of the Jewish schools.²⁶ There was little or nothing which the earliest fathers and apologists added to the Church's understanding of the Scriptures. During this early period the Church was too engaged in its struggle for existence to develop an accurate and scientific interpretation of Scripture.²⁷

Davidson affirmed that, as a body, the Fathers of the first six-hundred years following the death of Christ followed no definite maxims of interpretation. Their main object was allegorising.²⁸ Farrar declared that from the seventh through the eleventh centuries the work which was done was sheer compilation, first in the form of excerpts, and then of glosses. Made in an uncritical manner, they tended even in their own day to stereotype false positions and to hinder efforts toward original work. From the twelfth to the sixteenth century, of all who did work in the field of exegesis, only a few produced a single essential contribution or original principle which

²³Ibid., p. 167. ²⁴Terry, op. cit., p. 35.

²⁵Davidson, op. cit., p. 70. ²⁶Farrar, op. cit., p. 164.

²⁷Terry, loc. cit.

²⁸Davidson, op. cit., p. 161.

added to the understanding and explanation of the Word of God.²⁹ Exegesis was at a standstill, if not a slow, backward retreat.

However, there were a few during this period which kept hermeneutics from suffering complete oblivion, even though their ideas were either violently rejected or not practiced. For instance, Basil the Great, the Bishop of Caesarea in Capadocia, who died in 379, had very definite and strong views against the allegorical method, and strongly tended towards a literal interpretation.³⁰ Druthmar, a Benedictine Monk who died in 850, followed the grammatico-historical method.³¹ Augustine laid down a set of hermeneutical rules which were in advance for his day.³² Yet he himself did not put them into practice, but was addicted to the allegorical method.

The School of Antioch, founded around the end of the third century, was by far the most outstanding example of interpretation which was in direct contrast and conflict with the prevailing mode of allegorising.³³ This school ". . . possessed a deeper insight into the true method of exegesis than any which preceded or succeeded it during a thousand years. . . ." ³⁴ Lucian was the founder of the School of Antioch which was noted for producing such men as Diodorus of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Chrysostom. It was a literalistic school of interpretation, and fought allegorising. It endeavored to be logical, grammatical, and historical in its approach to the Scriptures. Much of its exegetical labors anticipated modern expositors by

²⁹Farrar, op. cit., pp. 245-248. ³⁰Davidson, op. cit., p. 115.

³¹Ibid., p. 167. ³²Ibid., pp. 133-134.

³³Berkhof, op. cit., pp. 20-21. ³⁴Farrar, op. cit., p. 210.

more than a millennium.³⁵

The allegorists, however, were victorious over the Antioch School, and discredited it by anathemas. Ramm stated that it was crushed by the orthodoxy of the day because of its supposed heretical connections with the Nestorians. Had it been allowed to exercise its influence and effect a change in hermeneutical principles, Ramm was of the opinion that the entire course of Church and human history might have been altered.³⁶

The Scholastic Period

This period was more stagnant in its development of hermeneutical principles than was even the preceding Patristic period. Of this period, Berkhof wrote that ". . . not a single new Hermeneutical principle was developed at this time, and exegesis was bound hand and foot by traditional lore and by the authority of the Church."³⁷ Though some of the schoolmen were great in philosophy and others in piety, all of them were weakest in interpretation.³⁸

Not only did the allegorical principle strongly exist at this time, but also there was present the tendency toward mystical and devotional interpretations of a very fanciful nature. Another handicap of this period was a lack of knowledge of the original languages on the part of the interpreters. Rather than seek an understanding of the original language, interpreters of this period were content to seek knowledge of the works of the Fathers. Thus the Church and its traditions were placed over and above

³⁵Ramm, op. cit., p. 29.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Berkhof, op. cit., pp. 23-24.

³⁸Ramm, op. cit., p. 25.

the teachings of Scripture. It was an era in which the theologians went to the Scripture, not to seek its obvious teaching, but to find in it their own humanly devised dogmas. The Bible was used to prove what the Church believed, rather than what it should believe. The interpretation of the Bible had to adapt itself to tradition and to the doctrine of the Church, inasmuch as to the Church, mainly the Pope, had become the infallible interpreter of both tradition and the Bible.³⁹

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries offered promise of the dawn of a new day. The fifteenth century was marked by a revival of learning. This revival eventually led to the study of the original languages of the Bible. The invention of the printing press also aided in the hastening of the coming Reformation. By the approach of the sixteenth century books were multiplied and the Scriptures were drawn forth from their monastic prison. As a result of the Renaissance once again the original languages of the Bible were studied. A new approach to the Bible developed as a result of this study. Previously the Bible was held to have a fourfold sense—the literal, tropological, the allegorical, and the analogical. During the awakening of these centuries this four-fold sense was gradually abandoned, and the principle was established that the Bible had but one sense.⁴⁰

The Reformation Period

Ramm believed that the Reformation was a hermeneutical reformation before it was theological or ecclesiastical. He gave two factors which made it such. The first was Occam's philosophical system and the influence it

³⁹Farrar, op. cit., p. 246.

⁴⁰Berkhof, op. cit., p. 26.

had upon Luther. Occam's position was that reason was for nature, philosophy, and science, whereas faith was for revelation, salvation, and religion. The gap between the two was unbridgeable, and whatever men know of God they know by divine revelation, and not by philosophy or reason. Thus the Bible was an authoritative book, and was the authority for dogma. Luther, under this training, magnified the authority of the Bible rather than philosophy. The second factor which made the reformation first of all hermeneutical was the recovery of the original languages of Scripture, making the Bible available for study.⁴¹

In their revolt the reformers regarded the Scriptures as the highest authority. In doing so the authority of the Church was denied. Scripture, and not tradition, was to be the final court of appeals in matters of theological disputes. No longer did they believe that the Church proclaimed what the Scriptures taught, but instead the reformers stated that the Scriptures set the norm for what the Church is to teach.

Desiderius Erasmus had great influence upon the reformers. His exegetical principles were, to a large degree, the guide of the reformers.⁴² He also aided in helping to break down belief in the authority of the Fathers, and took a bold stand against the exegetical infallibility of the Pope.⁴³

The leading reformers, Luther, Melancthon, Zwingli, Calvin, and their fellow-labourers, followed the mode of interpretation given by Erasmus. They adopted the grammatical or literal system of interpretation.⁴⁴ Those

⁴¹Ramm, op. cit., p. 30. ⁴²Davidson, op. cit., p. 182.

⁴³Farrar, op. cit., pp. 317-318. ⁴⁴Davidson, op. cit., p. 186.

methods which the Church had sanctioned were rejected; tradition and allegory were no longer to be the means of influencing interpretation which they had been in the past. ". . . From that time to the present, similar hermeneutical maxims have prevailed in the various divisions of the Protestant church"⁴⁵

The extent of influence which the German and Swiss reformers had on other expositors can be seen in the following statement made by Farrar:

. . . Among all of these there was a general agreement in principles, a rejection of scholastic methods, a refusal to acknowledge the exclusive dominance of patristic authority and church tradition; a repudiation of the hitherto dominant fourfold meaning; an avoidance of allegory; a study of the original languages; a close attention to the literal sense; a belief in the perspicuity and sufficiency of Scripture; the study of Scripture as a whole, and the reference of its total contents to Christ. . . .⁴⁶

It is believed by scholars that Calvin was the greatest interpreter and exegete of the Reformation.⁴⁷ Rejecting the allegorical method, Calvin adhered to what today is called the grammatico-historical method of interpretation.⁴⁸ Luther also employed this method.⁴⁹ Melancthon worked on the following two hermeneutical principles, the first of which was that Scripture must first be understood grammatically before theologically. The second principle was that the Scriptures have only one certain and simple sense.⁵⁰

Farrar listed six principles which Luther considered necessary for

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 186-187. ⁴⁶Farrar, op. cit., p. 342.

⁴⁷Ramm, op. cit., p. 32.

⁴⁸John F. Walvoord (ed.), Inspiration and Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Am. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), p. 153.

⁴⁹Ramm, loc. cit. ⁵⁰Berkhof, op. cit., p. 27.

the interpretation of Scripture. These were expressive of the views of other interpreters of this period also, as they appear to be in general agreement with them. These six principles have since Luther's time been steadily recognised in the interpretation of Scripture through all the Reformed and Lutheran Churches.⁵¹

First of these principles was Luther's recognition of the supreme and final authority of the Scriptures themselves, completely freed from all ecclesiastical influence. The second principle was that the Scriptures were sufficient in and of themselves. Thus Scripture interprets Scripture. Thirdly, the four-fold sense of Scripture was set aside, and the literal sense of Scripture alone accepted. Thus Scripture had but one meaning, and not many, according to this principle, and therefore the fourth principle was that Luther rejected the allegorical method of interpretation. The fifth principle was that of the perspicuity of Scripture in matters which pertain to the Law and Gospel, the truths of salvation. The sixth principle was the right of private judgment in the interpretation of Scripture.⁵²

Following the listing of the above principles, Farrar said that:

In accordance with these principles, Luther, in his preface to Isaiah (1528) and in other parts of his writings, lays down what he conceives to be the true rules of Scripture interpretation. He insists (1) on the necessity for grammatical knowledge; (2) on the importance of taking into consideration times, circumstances, and conditions; (3) on the observance of the context; (4) on the need of faith and spiritual illumination; (5) on keeping what he called "the proportions of faith"; and (6) on the reference of all Scripture to Christ.⁵³

Farrar believed the latter three statements contained the germs of

⁵¹Farrar, op. cit., p. 325.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 325-331.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 331-332.

many errors which subsequently developed. On the fourth point he objected by making the statement that one cannot claim an infallible authority for the interpretation of the Bible. On the fifth point Farrar felt that this meant that no explanation was to be admitted which runs counter to the current exegesis. This, Farrar felt, though homiletically true, can become erroneous when an attempt is made to read developed Christian dogmas between the lines of Jewish narratives.⁵⁴

This era set forth principles which up to this time had been either unknown or ignored. Greater advance in hermeneutics was made in this period than in many, many previous centuries. The Reformation era has set forth hermeneutical principles which have been carried over to the present moment.

The Post-Reformation Period

Study and interpretation of the Scriptures were no longer subordinated to Papal authority in the period following the Reformation, that of the Post-Reformation Period. However, this era gained a new master, that of current doctrinal confessions. This period retained the hermeneutical principle of interpreting Scripture by Scripture, but never-the-less exegetes found themselves in bondage to various confessional standards. It was at this time that the phrase "the analogy of faith" came to be erroneously employed as meaning the act of regulating Scripture to meet the various dogmatical positions which were current.⁵⁵ Of this era Berkhof said: ". . . exegesis

⁵⁴Farrar, op. cit., p. 334.

⁵⁵Carl F.H. Henry, (ed.), Revelation and the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), p. 291.

became the handmaid of dogmatics, and degenerated into a mere search for proof-texts. The Scriptures were studied in order to find there the truths that were embodied in the Confessions. . . .⁵⁶

The Post-Reformation Period was a time of searching for heresy and rigid systematization of doctrine. Farrar described this era as follows:

. . . It was a period in which liberty was exchanged for bondage; universal principles for beggarly elements; truth for dogmatism; independence for tradition; religion for system. A living reverence for Scripture was superseded by a dead theory of inspiration [verbal dictation theory]. Genial orthodoxy gave place to iron uniformity, and living thought to controversial dialectics. . . .⁵⁷

There were three reasons, according to Farrar, why this period was one of retardation. The first was its bondage to creeds, confessions, and inflexible theological views. The exegesis was a sterile type, controlled by certain doctrinal standards. It was a blending of Scripture to the creeds, rather than the creeds to the Scripture. Secondly, and as a result of the confessionalism, it was an age of producing voluminous books on theology, which were based on an erroneous idea that the Bible contained a neatly systematized form of doctrine. The third reason why this era was one of retardation was that the dogmatic inflexibility, according to Farrar's statement, lacked Christian love. This led to contentiousness, and matters of non-importance were regarded as important, whereas too often important matters were regarded as trifling. Thus there arose various controversies centering around debatable doctrinal issues.⁵⁸

However, this period was not without its critics. Berkhof has mentioned

⁵⁶Berkhof, op. cit., p. 29.

⁵⁷Farrar, op. cit., p. 358.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 359-366.

three reactions to the above characteristics of the Post-Reformation Period. These reactions, he stated, were more significant for hermeneutical principles than the period itself as set forth above. The first reaction was that of the Socinians. This reaction led them to rationalism, that is, nothing in the Bible could be accepted if it would not be rationally understood. Thus much of sound doctrine was thrown out, and ironically they found themselves, while rebelling against confessional slavery, dominated by their own dogmatic system. The second reaction was that of Coccejus, a Holland theologian, who felt the current method of interpretation regarded the Bible as too much a collection of proof-texts. In his desire to show that the Bible was an organic unit he went to two extremes; first, he believed that words of Scripture should signify all they possibly can. Thus he introduced a plurality of meanings by confusing the actual meaning and possible application. The second extreme of Coccejus was in his method of typology, in which he sought to find Christ in everything and everywhere, and also sought to find much of the New Testament Church in the Old Testament. The third reaction was that of the Pietists, who made an effort to interpret the Scripture in such a way as to bring about spiritual edification. Their method, however, led them to find special emphasis where none existed.⁵⁹

From the period itself one can see the danger of becoming bound to dogma to the extent that all future interpretation must rotate around present standards. Doctrine should always be open to the criticism of Scripture, and should not itself be the critic of Scripture. Scripture should govern doctrinal teachings and beliefs, and not doctrine the teaching of Scripture.

⁵⁹Berkhof, op. cit., pp. 28-29.

The Modern Period

At the beginning of this era there was a rising tide of infidelity.⁶⁰ For instance, according to Michaelis, Moses was reduced to merely a clever statesman. Eichhorn and Paulus explained the supernatural element in both the Old and New Testaments as a theory of mistake, hyperbole, and ignorance.⁶¹ During this period extreme divergent views concerning the inspiration of the Scripture found expression in the denial of verbal inspiration and the infallibility of the Bible.⁶² This period saw rationalism blossom and manifest itself as it had not done at any other time in history.

Berkhof stated that this era began as being marked by two opposite schools, the grammatical school and the historical school.⁶³ The former was founded by Ernesti, who attributed much to the field of exegesis in his day; he died in 1781. He was the founder of the philological approach to Scripture, the logical outcome of the Reformer's literalistic spirit.⁶⁴ He wrote a book on principles of New Testament interpretation which for four generations was a text-book for biblical scholars. In this book he stressed four principles, the first being that the literal sense of Scripture is to be retained, and the manifold rejected. The second rule was that except where the author meant to combine another sense with the literal, the allegorical and typological interpretations must be rejected. The third rule stated that because the Bible is in common agreement with other books concerning the

⁶⁰Farrar, op. cit., p. 404.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 402.

⁶²Berkhof, op. cit., p. 31.

⁶³Ibid., p. 33.

⁶⁴Ramm, op. cit., p. 33.

grammatical sense, this should be ascertained similarly in both cases. The fourth rule was that a supposed dogmatical sense may not determine the literal sense.⁶⁵

Ernesti maintained that the same general rules of philological and grammatical procedure which govern classical studies should also be applied to Biblical studies. Because of this his method bordered on rationalism.⁶⁶ This was placing Scripture too much in the same rank with other writings of antiquity.

The second school Berkhof mentioned was the historical school. This school originated with Semler, a pupil of Ernesti. Semler marked a distinct epoch in interpretation. His age was a very critical one in which human reason was upon the throne. ". . . He regarded it as a part of his religious duty to discriminate between those elements of the Bible which are temporary and Judaic, and that part which is of eternal validity. . . ."⁶⁷ He gave exegesis a new direction by greatly developing the historic method of interpretation, which stresses the circumstances, conditions, and times which surrounded the original writers. This brought forth the idea of accommodation, which idea declared that the writers of Scripture and also Jesus, though perhaps knowing better, geared their teaching, preaching, and writing according to the thoughts of the people whom they addressed, though their thoughts and beliefs may have been erroneous and without truthful facts. By this method doctrines such as judgment, hell, the second coming, and others,

⁶⁵Berkhof, op. cit., p. 33.

⁶⁶Ramm, op. cit., p. 33.

⁶⁷Farrar, op. cit., p. 403.

could be interpreted as merely stating the erroneous thought of the day in which they were expressed, and of themselves having no truth for our day. The result of Semler's work was rank rationalism in the field of historical exposition.⁶⁸

From the seeds of thought sown by Semler developed the humanism of Herder,⁶⁹ the skepticism of Paulus concerning the miracles of Scripture, the mythical interpretation of the New Testament by Strauss, and the belief of Baur that the New Testament originated by the Hegelian principle of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. The Old Testament was affected too as can be seen by the negative critical assaults on it, such as the Graf-Kuenen-Wellhausen school of thought. Little wonder that it was said of Semler that he was the father of rationalism.⁷⁰

There were others who were important for this period also, such as Kant, who subjected religion to his system of morals. ". . . According to him, the ethical improvement of man must be the controlling principle in the exposition of the Word of God. . . ."⁷¹ Another who should be mentioned is Schleiermacher, whose ". . . main work was to vindicate for Christianity its place in the emotions, and not to treat it either as a series of dogmas, a philosophical problem, or a system of morals . . ."⁷² Both Kant and Schleiermacher have had a strong influence on the science of Biblical hermeneutics. There are still other important figures of this period. However,

⁶⁸Berkhof, op. cit., p. 34. ⁶⁹Farrar, op. cit., p. 405.

⁷⁰Berkhof, loc. cit. ⁷¹Ibid., p. 37.

⁷²Farrar, op. cit., p. 409.

such must be omitted as it has not been the purpose of this writer to give detailed accounts of each era, but rather just a brief description of each. The section of this paper dealing with the hermeneutical principles of liberalism and neo-orthodoxy has shown the fruits of this period.

Through the maze of rationalism and infidelity of this era, and probably as a positive reaction to such thinking, a particular system of hermeneutics was brought forward which gained many adherents. The establishment of the grammatics-historical method of interpretation was the lasting contribution of this period.

II. IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY

FOR TODAY'S HERMENEUTICS

There are two ways in which a study of the various periods of Biblical hermeneutics can be helpful. First, the good points of each period can readily be adapted for use in current hermeneutical practice. Secondly, such a study should enable one to realize the errors which each era has made, and help avoid a repetition of such mistakes.

CHAPTER IV

CONSERVATIVE HERMENEUTICS

As previously stated in chapter two of this paper, the conservative view of Scripture conforms with the Biblical concept of its own nature and character. There is great truth in the statement that ". . . conservative scholarship labors within bounds which are erected by its view of revelation and Scripture. . . ." ¹

Conservative theologians are strongly guided and influenced by a presupposition before the work of interpretation is even begun. "The presupposition of conservative theology is that the Bible demands an approach in reverence and faith. It claims to be the Word of God and must be examined and interpreted in that light. . . ." ² Ernest F. Kevan has pointed out that there must be presuppositions, but the difference between the presuppositions of the conservative interpreter and those of other theological persuasion is that the conservative gets his presuppositions from the Scripture. ³

I. IMPLICATIONS OF THE BIBLE'S CONCEPT OF ITSELF UPON CONSERVATIVE HERMENEUTICS

The high view of Scripture which the conservative interpreter holds

¹Carl F.H. Henry (ed.), Contemporary Evangelical Thought (Great Neck, New York: Channel Press, 1957), p. 66.

²Carl F.H. Henry, (ed.), Revelation and the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), p. 293.

³Ibid.

involves certain implications which largely determine his hermeneutical approach to the Scripture. This truth is largely evidenced in the following two ways: (1) he interprets the Bible literally but not necessarily literalistically, and (2) he interprets the Bible as a unified whole which has but one sense or purpose.

Involves Interpreting the Bible Literally

Those who defend the Bible as a true revelation insist that it conveys literal truth. . . .⁴ The axle upon which the whole system of conservative hermeneutics rotates is its insistence on interpreting Scripture to find the literal truth involved in a passage. The literal meaning of a passage of Scripture does not necessarily mean the literalistic meaning, as is shown in this chapter.

When it is stated that the conservative interpreter insists on the literal meaning of a passage, it must not be inferred that he is unaware of the fact that much of the Bible is clothed in figurative terms and expressions, and is composed of various types of literature. The conservative scholar recognizes that within the Bible there is to be found allegory, metaphor, parable, fable, metonymy, synecdoche, apostrophe, hyperbole, personification, typology, riddles, symbols, and various other figures of speech. He is also aware that different types of writings can be found in Scripture, such as poetry, prose, Psalms, Proverbs, history, legal matter, and so forth. All of these factors are taken into account by the conservative interpreter, and yet he still insists on the literal meaning, the literal truth, of the

⁴Ibid., p. 39.

Scriptures, while at the same moment knowing much of the Bible is figurative. He realizes that ". . . unless there are literal statements along with these figures of speech, or at the very least, unless figures of speech can be translated into literal truth, a book conveys no definite meaning."⁵

Because the conservative interpreter realizes that some of the Bible is couched in figurative expressions, he is cognizant that that part of it cannot be interpreted literalistically. For instance, Jesus said, "I am the vine" (John 15:1), and "I am the door" (John 10:7), and speaking to believers He said, "ye are the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13). Can these statements be literalistically interpreted? Common sense, of course, says "no." But because they cannot be interpreted literalistically does not deny the fact that there is a literal truth or meaning behind these statements. Are the parables, fables, allegories, metaphors, and so forth, to be interpreted in a literalistic manner? The answer, of course, is another emphatic "no." But how, then, are such figures to be interpreted? As this paper will later deal with the area of figurative language of the Bible separately, the following statements will be concise.

Ernest F. Kevan has set forth a principle which applies not only to the metaphor, but all figurative language when he wrote the following:

. . . When a writer employs metaphor he is to be understood metaphorically and his metaphorical meaning is his literal meaning: that is to say, it is the truth he wishes to convey. The term "literal" stands strictly as the opposite of "figurative," but in modern speech it often means "real," and it is used in this way by those who want to be sure that they know what the writer really and originally meant. In this sense a metaphorical saying is "literally" true. . . . Thus a metaphorical statement is "literally" true but cannot be "literalistically" true. The "literal" meaning, then, is what the particular writer intended, and

⁵Ibid.

although he used metaphor, no one familiar with the language in which he expressed himself could reasonably misunderstand him.

The bearing of all this on Biblical interpretation must now be clear. When it is affirmed that the Bible is literally true, it is not implied that it contains no metaphorical elements, but merely that what was said metaphorically must be understood to be its real meaning.⁶

Ramm listed six reasons for such an approach to Scripture. They are:

(a). That the literal meaning of sentences is the normal approach in all languages. The major portion of our conversation, writing, and thinking is literalistic. If a paper, or a book, or a poem is read, it is assumed that as the method of procedure we will interpret the material literally. . . .

(b). That all secondary meanings of documents, parables, types, allegories, and symbols, depend for their very existence on the previous literal meaning of the terms. The lion as a symbol of strength is based upon literal lions who are literally strong . . . i.e., the symbolic and allegorical is completely dependent on the literal and could not exist without it. . . .

(c). That the greater part of the Bible makes adequate sense when interpreted literally.

(d). That the literalistic approach does not blindly rule out figures of speech, symbols, allegories, and types; but, if the nature of the sentence so demands, it readily yields to the second sense. . . .

(e). That this method is the only sane and safe check on the imaginations of man. . . .

(f). That this method is the only one consonant with the nature of inspiration. The plenary inspiration of the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit guided men into truth and away from error. In this process the Spirit of God used language, and the units of language (as meaning, not as sound) are words and thoughts. The thought is the thread that strings the words together. Therefore, our very exegesis must commence with a study of words and grammar, the two fundamentals of all meaningful speech.⁷

The main idea, in the way of summary of the preceding paragraphs, is

⁶Ibid., p. 294.

⁷Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Boston: W.A. Wilde Company, 1950), p. 43.

that the conservative interpreter conceives the Bible as being literally true in all of its teachings, but not necessarily literalistically true in all of its parts. But even in those parts which cannot be literalistically true, there are never-the-less literal truths being conveyed. It is the objective of the conservative interpreter, not to be literalistic where the use of language and expression forbid a literalistic interpretation, but to be literal in the manner set forth in this paper, that is, to seek for the "literal truth" which is behind every statement in the Bible. Thus the whole Bible is literally true, but not all of it is literalistically true. This is a basic fact which is ever before the conservative interpreter and regulates his hermeneutical principles accordingly.

Involves Interpreting the Bible as a Book With One Sense and Purpose

Believing that the Scriptures were divinely revealed and its writers were divinely inspired, the conservative interpreter also believes that there exists within this revelation from God a "oneness" of all the books and teachings of the Bible. Because of this unity within the Scriptures there is ". . . one purpose [which] pervades the whole Bible . . ."⁸ The conservative scholar is firmly persuaded that because of this unity Scripture does not contradict Scripture, but rather Scripture compliments Scripture. It is only logical to believe that if God has given man, by supernatural means, the revelation which we have within the Bible, that this revelation is not going to contradict itself, but will be consistent throughout in its teachings.

Concerning the unity of the Scriptures, Berkhof has stated that:

⁸ Henry, Revelation and the Bible, op. cit., p. 149.

. . . The Word of God is an organic production, and consequently the separate books that constitute it are organically related to one another. The Holy Spirit so directed the human authors in writing the books⁹ of the Bible that their productions are mutually complementary. . . .

If the Scriptures are an organic production, then they should be interpreted as one unit, as one book, as a unified whole. There is, then, but a single, and not a double or triple, sense to the Scriptures.

The principle of organic unity is . . . helpful as a corrective to mis-interpretation. For if parts of the Scriptures which should be in agreement, such as the Gospels, are expounded so as to make them appear contradictory, then one has a right to question the soundness of one's interpretation. And one will usually find that if the data are seriously and sincerely re-examined, the apparent contradictions will disappear.

In fact, in view of the fundamental oneness of the Scriptures, it can safely be said that there are no substantial contradictions within them, no matter which passages are compared. There may be differences . . . but these are not of an essential nature. This fact is of great consequence in the guidance of Biblical interpretation.¹⁰

There are four factors which are involved in the belief that the Bible is a unified Book with one sense and purpose. The first factor is that of the phenomena of Scripture, the second is that of the progressiveness of revelation, the third is that Christ ties all Scripture together and is at its center, and the fourth is that of analogy of faith. It has not been the purpose of this writer to give a detailed discussion on these matters, but only a brief, concise statement as to their relationship to hermeneutics.

Phenomena of Scripture. It cannot be denied that within the Bible are certain phenomena which present difficulties to the interpreter who

⁹Louis Berkhof, Principles of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1950), p. 138.

¹⁰Robert A. Traina, Methodical Bible Study: A New Approach to Hermeneutics (New York: Ganis and Harris, 1952), p. 159.

maintains that the Bible is God's divinely revealed Word, and therefore has one common sense running through it from Genesis to Revelation. But how can this be when there are "so-called" contradictions within the Scriptures?

The conservative scholar does not believe that there are actual contradictions in the Bible; there are only "apparent" discrepancies. He realizes that in the Bible can be found problems in the genealogical tables, and in various numerical, historical, doctrinal, ethical and prophetic statements. He is aware also of various other matters which present problems. However, he maintains that though there may be problems such as the above, these problems are not actual contradictions nor discrepancies, but are only apparent contradictions and discrepancies.

The purpose of this writer has not been to discuss the various apparent discrepancies and find the solution to their problems. Instead the purpose was to state the conservative's attitude and view towards such matters.

How then does the interpreter who contends that Scripture is the infallibly revealed Word of God view these so-called contradictions? Ramm stated the conservative scholar's attitude when he said that ". . . belief in the inerrancy of the Scriptures leads us to affirm that there are no contradictions in the Bible. . . ."¹¹

Milton S. Terry offered helpful insight into the attitude and view of the conservative expositor of God's Word when he affirmed that:

A large proportion of the discrepancies of the Bible are traceable to one or more of the following causes: The errors of copyists in the manuscripts; the variety of names applied to the same person or place; different methods of reckoning times and seasons; different local and historical standpoints; and the special scope and plan of each particular

¹¹Ramm, op. cit., p. 129.

book. Variations are not contradictions, and many essential variations arise from different methods of arranging a series of particular facts. The peculiarities of oriental thought and speech often involve seeming extravagance of statement and verbal inaccuracies, which are of a nature to provoke the criticism of the less impassioned writers of the West. . . .¹²

This brief discussion in no way professes to have solved the problem of the phenomena of the Scriptures. Nor has it attempted to state that all the apparent discrepancies and so-called contradictions can be rationalized satisfactorily by the conservative exegete. This discussion has endeavored to show that his firm belief in the Bible as God's infallibly revealed Word causes him to view Scripture as being without error and contradiction. Believing that the Bible is a complete and unbroken unit he accepts such areas as being, somehow, reconciliable. Here again is shown how the concept one holds of the Scriptures will largely determine his hermeneutical principles.

Progressive Revelation. Believing that the Bible is an organic unity, how then is the interpreter to account for the variances of concepts between the Old and the New Testament? This can only adequately be answered by the fact of progressive revelation.

Berkhof adequately stated that there is diversity between the two Testaments. There is diversity in contents, the Old containing the promise, the New the fulfillment; there is diversity as to form, the Old being prophetic, while the New is apostolical; and the divine factor is more prominent in the Old than in the New; there is even diversity as to language, the Old

¹²Milton S. Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics: A Treatise on the Interpretation of the Old and New Testaments (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1911), p. 404.

being written in Hebrew, and the New in Hellenistic Greek.¹³ Other diversities could be mentioned, but these are adequate to show that there are differences between the Old and the New Testaments.

Differences which exist between the Old and the New Testament are accounted for by progressive revelation. The New Testament brings to light much which was in darkness in the Old Testament, as it is an unfolding, a fulfillment, of much which was taught in the Old Testament. Revelation, incomplete in the Old Testament, has been completed in the New. This does not mean that the revelation of the new dispensation is more authentic than that of the old. Instead it means that God has given revelation by stages and degrees, accordingly as man in his spiritual development was capable of receiving it. In this sense the New Testament is but the fulfillment of the revelation which God had begun in the Old Testament. This has important implications for hermeneutics. This is seen in the following statement:

If this be true, one should never interpret the Old Testament as if it were the New Testament . . . the Old Testament is preparatory and partial, whereas the New Testament is the final fulfillment. If this be so, then it is essential that one never interpret the incomplete as if it were complete, the preparation as if it were the fulfillment. In fine, the New Testament concept of God should not be read into the Old Testament. To fail to follow this basic principle is to assure eisegesis.

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However, it should be stressed further that it is just as erroneous to read the New Testament as if it had never been preceded by the Old Testament as it is to read the Old Testament as if it were the New Testament. . . . The contribution of the Old Testament is indispensable to the full understanding of the New Testament. . . .¹⁴

Though the interpreter realizes that the New Testament completes the

¹³Berkhof, op. cit., p. 55.

¹⁴Traina, op. cit., pp. 156-158.

revelation begun in the Old Testament, he also realizes that there remains a fundamental unity, a perfect harmony, between the Old and the New. They are complimentary one to the other. Because of this their teachings do not conflict with one another, but add to each other. Much of the New Testament cannot be understood without the background provided by the Old Testament, and much of the Old Testament is utterly inadequate without being able to see its completion and explanation in the New Testament. Thus ". . . the Old and New Testament are related to each other as type and antitype, prophecy and fulfillment, germ and perfect development . . ."15

Berkhof has listed four considerations which should serve as guides to the interpreter in interpreting the Old and the New Testaments in their mutual relation.

(1) The Old Testament offers the key to the right interpretation of the New. The contents of the New Testament are already the fruit of a long previous development. The Old Testament, for instance, contains the account of creation and of man's fall in sin, of the establishment of the covenant of grace and of the adumbrations of the coming Redeemer. All of these are presupposed in the New Testament, and knowledge of them is a prerequisite for its proper understanding. Moreover, the Old Testament contains a great deal that serves to illustrate New Testament passages. . . .

(2) The New Testament is a commentary on the Old. While the Old Testament contains but a shadowy representation of spiritual realities, the New Testament presents them in the perfect light of the fulness of time. The one contains types, the other antitypes; the one, prophecy, the other, fulfillment. The more perfect revelation of the New Testament illumines the pages of the Old. . . .

(3) On the one hand, the interpreter should beware of minimizing the Old Testament. . . . It is the error of many in the present day, who regard the Old Testament simply as the fruit of historical development, and who, in some cases, boldly declare that it has had its day now that the New Testament is in our possession.

15Berkhof, op. cit., p. 133.

(4) On the other hand, he should guard against reading too much into the Old Testament. This is done, for instance, whenever the details of the work of redemption,¹⁶ as revealed in the New Testament, are read back into the Old Testament.

Christ and the unity of Scripture. The conservative exegete believes that the Bible has unity because it is integrated in Jesus Christ. Frank E. Gaebelin has stated that " . . . the integrating principle of the Bible is unquestionably Christological. The key to Biblical unity . . . is nothing less and none other than a Person, the living Lord . . ."¹⁷

Christ believed that He was the unifying principle of Scripture. He proved by Scripture that He was the son of David, the expected Messiah, of the Old Testament by his reading of Isaiah 61:1-2 as recorded in Luke 4:16-21. He stated that the One who sent Him had previously, in the Old Testament, given witness of Him (John 5:37). To the Jews who thought that they could have eternal life by the law and apart from Christ He told to "Search the Scriptures . . . these are they which bear witness of me; and ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life" (John 5:39-40). He warned the Jews that to reject Him was also to reject Moses of the Old Testament, when He said:

There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, on whom ye have set your hope. For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:45-47). (Underlining supplied).

Elsewhere Christ said, referring to Old Testament prophecy in Matthew 26:56, "All this is come to pass, that the scriptures [Old Testament] of the prophets

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 137-138.

¹⁷Henry, Revelation and the Bible, or. cit., p. 394.

might be fulfilled." To the disciples of Emmaus Jesus taught that He is found in all the prophets, for it is written in Luke 24:27: "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." When He appeared before the ten in Jerusalem He clearly stated His centrality in the Old Testament Scriptures when He said: "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things might be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). From Scriptural evidence it is obvious that Christ conceived of Himself as being the center and object of the Old Testament. Pierre Marcel has written that:

. . . The whole economy of the Old Testament is centered in Christ. The Gospel therefore is found also throughout the Old Testament where nothing can be understood without Christ. In the Law one can, one must, discover Christ, his covenant, his mediation, his kingship, the universality of his reign. . . .¹⁸

That the apostles follow our Lord in seeing him as the center of the Scriptures is evident from the sermons recorded in Acts. At Pentecost Peter used Psalm 16:8-11 and Psalm 110:1 as the basis of his proclamation of the risen Christ (Acts 2:25-36); and in his second sermon he identified him with the prophet of whom Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 18:15,18,19 (Acts 3:20-22). When the Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip the Evangelist the meaning of Isaiah 53, Philip "began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:30-35). At Antioch in Pisidia Paul preached Christ (Acts 13:32-37) from Psalm 2, Isaiah 55 and Psalm 16. And that his preaching was based upon the centrality of Christ throughout Scripture is plain from the description of his method in Acts 17:2,3, which reports that "Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and this same Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ." As for his wider ministry to the churches with their preponderance of Gentile members, the same appeal to Christ in the Old Testament is part of the very warp and woof of the Pauline epistles.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 133.

What was true of Paul was true of others also. . . .¹⁹

Christ also believed that He was the central figure of revelation beyond that of the old dispensation, else He would not have said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). Nor would Christ have claimed to have been equal with God (John 14:9-13), and to have been sent from God the Father (John 20:21). From these passages, and other similar ones which could be quoted, it is evident that Christ believed Himself to be the central figure of all Scripture, both that of the old dispensation and that of the new.

The implications which this has for the interpreter who accepts the Bible as the revealed Word of God are clear. His approach to the Scripture cannot but be greatly influenced by the fact that he realizes Christ is the central figure of the totality of Scripture. How can the hermeneutical principles of the conservative scholar help but be geared to Christ, when ". . . to see him in all parts of the Word, from Genesis to Revelation, requires no labored exegesis. . . ." ²⁰ By this concept interpretation is to begin and end with Christ in view.

Analogy of faith. The fact that the Bible is one consistent whole implies, at least for this writer, a fourth involvement, that of the principle of analogy of faith. What is meant by the expression, "analogy of faith?"

. . . The basic notion of the analogy of faith is that there is one system of doctrine taught in the Holy Bible and only one. Therefore, the individual interpretations must conform to the system of doctrine found in the Bible. . . .²¹

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 393-394.

²⁰Ibid., p. 400.

²¹Ramm, op. cit., p. 90.

Such a view can only proceed on the belief that the Scriptures are an organic whole, and all parts are complimentary and mutually related. Thus there is but one revelation, one revealed Word of God, though this revelation is progressive in its development. Each part of this unity is individually governed by the whole of God's revelation. Thus each segment is consistent and in proper relationship with the remaining of the revealed Word in its teachings and practices.

Berkhof has pointed out that there are two degrees of analogy of faith. The one is positive analogy, or those teachings and doctrines which are directly and explicitly found in the Scriptures. The second is the general analogy, or the obvious implied meaning of Scripture, which is not directly and explicitly stated in Scripture.²² It will be shown, later in this paper, that the implied meaning of Scripture is as much the Word of God as is the explicit meaning, that which is directly stated.

On this principle of analogy of faith, no errors or discrepancies are believed to exist. This principle, however, does not deny the fact that there may be "apparent" discrepancies in the Bible, but does deny that there are real discrepancies. It maintains that when more light is received all the so-called conflicts and contradictions of Scripture will be solved. Nor does the principle of analogy of faith deny that there are difficult passages, which an adequate interpretation has not been found yet to the satisfaction of all.

What the principle of analogy does proclaim is that the Bible does

²²Berkhof, op. cit., pp. 164-165.

not teach one thing in one place, and the exact opposite in another. What the Bible teaches about man, sin, God, Christ, and so forth in one portion will not contradict what it teaches about the same doctrine elsewhere, though it possibly may add to or enlighten that which is taught in another section. This principle further teaches that not only are the individual particular doctrines consistent within themselves, but they are also consistent in their relationship with other doctrines. It cannot be otherwise if the Bible is God's revealed Word to man as it claims to be. The principle of analogy of faith proclaims that the Bible is one consistent, unified whole in its teachings.

Berkhof has stated four rules which the interpreter should follow when employing the analogy of faith in interpreting Scripture.

(1) A doctrine that is clearly supported by the analogy of faith cannot be contradicted by a contrary and obscure passage. . . .

(2) A passage that is neither supported nor contradicted by the analogy of faith may serve as the positive foundation for a doctrine, provided it is clear in its teaching. Yet the doctrine so established will not have the same force as one that is founded on the analogy of faith.

(3) When a doctrine is supported by an obscure passage of Scripture only, and finds no support in the analogy of faith, it can only be accepted with great reserve. Possibly, not to say probably, the passage requires a different interpretation than the one put upon it. Cf. Rev. 20: 1-4.

(4) In cases where the analogy of Scripture leads to the establishment of two doctrines that appear contradictory, both doctrines should be accepted as Scriptural in the confident belief that they resolve themselves into a higher unity. . . .²³

²³ Ibid., p. 166.

II. THE GRAMMATICO-HISTORICAL

METHOD OF INTERPRETATION

The preceding section of this chapter has laid ground work for the grammatico-historical method of interpretation. To those who believe the Bible to be God's divinely inspired Word, this method is the basic approach to the exposition of Scripture. Davidson has stated that this method alone is sanctioned by the Scriptures.²⁴

What is this hermeneutical method? It is an interpretation of the language of the Scripture as is required by the laws of grammar and the facts of history. It is a study of the thoughts and language of the Bible as viewed in its own grammatical expression and historical setting.

Grammatically, this method is a study of words, thought construction, and ideas in the Scripture by means of the laws of grammar. Historically, this method is an effort to arrive at an understanding of the author's meaning of words and thoughts as regulated by historical considerations of the time when expressed. Therefore it demands a knowledge of the time and circumstances of the author. Davidson has pointed out that "Grammatical and historical interpretation when rightly understood are synonymous. . . ."²⁵

. . . The historical interpreter and the grammatical interpreter do not pursue separate, distinct methods of procedure;—they follow the same path, and are occupied with the same thing. It is quite erroneous to make historical and grammatical exposition different things. The grammatical meaning is the same with the historical; and both constitute all the meaning intended by the Holy Spirit. . . .²⁶

²⁴Samuel Davidson, Sacred Hermeneutics Developed and Applied Including A History of Biblical Interpretation From the Earliest of the Fathers to the Reformation (Edinburgh: Thomas Clark, MDCCCXLIII), p. 225.

²⁵Ibid., p. 226. ²⁶Ibid., p. 227.

Previously stated was the fact that because the conservative interpreter has a high view of Scripture two things would largely determine his hermeneutical approach to Scripture. In the first place he would interpret the Bible as containing literal truth, though not always in a literalistic manner. Secondly, he would interpret the Bible as a unified whole which has but one sense. These two implications of a high view of Scripture help to lay the foundation upon which the grammatico-historical method builds.

That the above is true is seen in the fact that the grammatico-historical method is essentially the same as the literal method.²⁷ "To interpret literally means nothing more or less than to interpret in terms of normal, usual, designation. . . ."²⁸ This is exactly what the grammatico-historical method attempts to do, and agrees with Ramm's insistence that all the Scripture, be it symbolical, parabolical, typological or poetical, depends upon the literal meaning for its interpretation.²⁹ The fundamental principle of the grammatico-historical method, by means of literal interpretation, ". . . is to gather from the Scriptures themselves the precise meaning which the writers intended to convey. . . ."³⁰

The grammatico-historical principle of interpretation applies to each book and author of the Scriptures. Because the Bible is a unified book there will be no contradictory exegetical results through using this method. Each section will form a harmonious, connected whole when put under the searchlight of the grammatico-historical method.

²⁷Terry, op. cit., p. 101. ²⁸Ramm, op. cit., p. 65.

²⁹Ibid., p. 101. ³⁰Davidson, op. cit., p. 70.

It is evident that neither the liberal nor neo-orthodox exegete could embrace the grammatico-historical view. Neither, of course, could accept a literal method of interpretation, which the grammatico-historical method demands. Liberalism would dismiss a literal interpretation and form its own, whenever such an interpretation would not coincide with the dictates of reason, e.g., the doctrine of hell. Neo-orthodoxy, of course, could not accept much of the Scripture as actual historical events, and in place of their literal meaning would substitute the method of allegorical or mythological interpretation. Here again the fact is evidenced that the concept of Scripture one maintains will largely determine the hermeneutical principles which will be applied in the work of Biblical interpretation.

Before developing the actual mechanical expression of the grammatico-historical method of interpretation, an attempt will be made to briefly discuss some of the methods of hermeneutics which this writer considers to be erroneous. These methods have been applied at various times in the history of the Christian Church.

Erroneous Methods of Interpretation

The reason for a study of various methods which this writer holds to be erroneous, has been to gain a clearer insight into how much methods of hermeneutics can lead to confusion and misunderstanding of the Scriptures. Though these methods have been used in the past, some of them, at least partially, can be seen in operation today, e.g., the allegorical system of the Roman Catholic Church, the rationalistic method of the liberal exegetes, or the mythological and allegorical method of neo-orthodoxy. Such a study enables one to more correctly apply proper methods of interpretation to the

Scriptures, giving greater assurance of correct exegesis.

The purpose of this writer has not been to imply by this study that the following methods are without any truth in them. Robert A. Traina adequately expressed this writer's opinion when he stated that ". . . it should be noted that each of these contains some truth or is motivated by at least a partially legitimate cause. . . ." ³¹ He further declared that:

. . . The fact that these practices involve certain elements of truth serves to make one aware that fallacious exposition is frequently the result of an extreme overemphasis on a valid but not all-inclusive phase of exegesis. . . . ³²

There have been many and various methods of interpretation used in the past which are today considered, by those of the conservative persuasion at least, as being erroneous hermeneutical methods. A brief survey of a few of the more popular methods, conceived as erroneous by at least the above group, will follow.

The Rationalistic Method. There are so many varieties of rationalism that it is difficult to define it, or to describe its prominent features. ³³

It might be said, however, that in general this view is an attempt ". . . to expound the Scriptures in such a way as to make them understandable and acceptable to the reason." ³⁴ Whatever cannot be proved by reason is to be rejected, and a rationalistic interpretation given. Rationalism rejects the miraculous and supernatural elements of the Bible. It conceives much of the contents of Scripture as containing error, and at its best the Bible is but man's greatest piece of literature but little more. In this view of

³¹Traina, op. cit., p. 167. ³²Ibid., pp. 167-168.

³³Davidson, op. cit., p. 217. ³⁴Traina, op. cit., p. 169.

hermeneutics ". . . the interpreters are the guide and rule of life, and the Bible is merely called upon to sanction their conclusions . . ."³⁵

Davidson has pointed out that this system is often referred to as including the accommodation method, the mythical method, and the psychological method.³⁶ These methods are mentioned further on in this section of the paper.

The Literalistic Method. This view insists that interpretation of the Scriptures must be based on a strong literalistic view of the Bible. It demands that the Bible be explained largely by an extreme literalistic method of interpretation. This view, held mainly by Dogmatists, is capable of proving almost anything it desires. By such a method Dungan stated that ". . . something can be found, by taking a jingle of words, that will establish any theory. . . ."³⁷

Traina has pointed out that it is impossible to be a thorough going literalist, as one is forced to interpret some Scriptural statements figuratively. Even those who embrace this theory are forced at times to a figurative interpretation, though a literalist will not employ the figurative if by doing so it would place his theory and views in jeopardy.³⁸

Too often the conservative scholar is tagged as belonging to this school of hermeneutics. This is a false classification, for as already stated

³⁵D.R. Dungan, Hermeneutics: A Text Book (Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1888), p. 68.

³⁶Davidson, op. cit., p. 222.

³⁷Dungan, op. cit., p. 37.

³⁸Traina, op. cit., p. 175.

he does not attempt to be literalistic in his method of hermeneutics, though he does attempt to discover the literal truth embodied in all of Scripture. This he does by a realization that the Bible has various modes of expression, and he interprets accordingly, knowing that behind all the modes of expression, be it figurative or otherwise, there is a literal truth. He further realizes that a literalistic interpretation does not always unfold the literal truth contained in every passage of Scripture.

The Dogmatic Method. This method is an attempt to read into the Scriptures certain doctrines which have already been accepted as true and Scriptural. It is an attempt to force the Bible to teach doctrines which have been devised by man. This method ". . . first determines what it is willing shall be found in the Scriptures, and then goes to work at once to find nothing else there, and even to refuse that anything else shall be found. . . ." ³⁹ By this method ". . . the Bible is explained in such a way as to substantiate certain beliefs, and all possible interpretations which may negate those beliefs are promptly and arbitrarily rejected. . . ." ⁴⁰

The correct approach to Scripture, of course, begins first with the Scripture and then forms doctrines, whereas the dogmatical approach begins with doctrines and then moves toward Scripture to prove these doctrines. This is proof texting in the negative and erroneous sense of the term. The correct approach allows the Bible to speak for itself, and is thus objective; the dogmatical approach determines what the Bible shall teach, and is thus subjective. The Roman Catholic Church has followed, and still does follow,

³⁹Dungan, op. cit., p. 78.

⁴⁰Traina, op. cit., p. 168.

this method. They maintain that the Bible must be interpreted in harmony with tradition.⁴¹ This method has not ended with the Reformation in Protestantism, for today it can be found in different quarters. Following the Reformation it took on a form other than that of the tradition of the Church and the fathers. Various confessional standards of different Protestant groups came into existence. Of these groups Berkhof stated that:

. . . while they refused to subject their exegesis to the domination of tradition and of the doctrine of the Church as formulated by councils and popes, they were in danger of /sic./ leading it into bondage to the Confessional Standards of the Church. . . .⁴²

That there is a degree of this method operative today can be seen in various views held by Calvinists and Arminians, some of which are directly opposed to one another. The exegetical results of both of these groups are frequently influenced by their individual views which distinguishes one group from the other. Both groups, in general, maintain the Biblical concept of itself. Both groups, in general, are in agreement on Biblical hermeneutics. Yet at points of doctrinal differences there may result two different interpretations of certain passages of Scripture. This is but proof of an earlier statement, that though a correct concept of Scripture will largely assure correct hermeneutical principles, it does not always assure correct exegetical results. Herein enters the totality of an interpreter's background as he applies hermeneutical principles to the Bible; his dogmatic views can easily influence the application of his hermeneutical principles, even though they may be correct principles. This largely accounts for the variances between Spirit-filled and Spirit-led Calvinists and Arminians.

⁴¹Berkhof, op. cit., p. 27.

⁴²Berkhof, op. cit., p. 28.

The Mythological Method. Davidson has stated the following about this method.

This system proceeds on the assumption that the historical facts of the Old and New Testaments were not actual occurrences, but the dress which covers truths lying beyond the physical world. Whatever appears strange or miraculous, such as the appearances of angels, the history of creation, the account of man's temptation and fall, &c., is regarded as a mythus, i.e. a peculiar dress suited to the rude notions of the times in which the writers lived. . . .⁴³

The historic aspect of the Scripture is not treated as actual, factual occurrences. They are merely stories which have an underlying spiritual truth for mankind. They themselves are not historically true, but are vessels which convey truth. This theory today can be seen in Rudolf Bultmann's attempt at "demythologization" of the Bible.

It is apparent, as Traina has pointed out, that "the mythological approach is closely related to the preceding type [rationalistic method] in that it is often an expression of rationalism. . . ."⁴⁴ This can be seen in its willingness to reject as fact any portion of Scripture which it pleases by declaring historical acts to be myths and not actual realities.

This theory is an aspect of neo-orthodoxy, and has received treatment in chapter six of this paper.

Allegorical Method. The allegorical method of interpretation is based upon a profound reverence for the Scriptures, and a desire to exhibit their manifold depths of wisdom. . . .⁴⁵ However, it does not attempt to find the literal truth of the Scriptures. It attempts to find a deeper hidden meaning

⁴³Davidson, op. cit., p. 206.

⁴⁴Traina, op. cit., p. 170.

⁴⁵Terry, op. cit., p. 60.

than is outwardly manifested. It proclaims that there are many meanings to passages of Scripture, and the literal meaning is the least desirable since it is not the true meaning intended. Thus, even though this view may have a profound reverence for Scripture, it is evident that its hermeneutical principles are faulty from the beginning because it sets no bounds within which the interpreter must roam. Actually, it is a form of rationalism, for ". . . what the Bible may mean to any man will depend upon what the man would like to have it mean. . . ." ⁴⁶ Thus, while there is a veneer of Biblical reverence, underneath the theory is found complete subjectivism. Ernest F. Kevan stated that allegorism of the strict type, the Alexandrian form, ". . . introduces nothing but chaos into speech and destroys all objectivity of truth; it is 'fantasy unlimited.'" ⁴⁷ This method, as no other method, even including the rationalistic and dogmatic, is able to make the Scriptures say absolutely whatever the individual interpreter desires. Though this is an old method, it still maintains an amazing hold upon certain exegetes even today. ⁴⁸ It is the contention of this writer that neo-orthodoxy maintains the main principles involved in this system of thought in its hermeneutical principles. The chapter on the "Neo-Orthodox Concept of Hermeneutics" in this paper has shown how the allegorical method has influenced its method of interpretation.

The Mystical Method. Terry has pointed out that this method is closely

⁴⁶Dungan, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

⁴⁷Henry, Revelation and the Bible, op. cit., p. 291.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 289.

allied to the allegorical method. This form of thought attempts to find an unknown and mystical meaning in every word of the Scriptures.⁴⁹ This method is absurd, for every interpreter can find as many meanings as he pleases in Scripture. However, this is not to deny that some parts of the Bible does have a mystical sense—but, as has been shown in the section of this chapter dealing with the literature of the Bible, this mystical sense is not a subjective, hidden sense but is instead in such instances the literal truth, the real meaning, of such portions of Scripture.

The Accommodation Method. This theory owes its distinction to the father of the destructive school of German rationalism, J.S. Semler.⁵⁰ By this theory it is maintained that Jesus and His apostles accommodated themselves to the spirit of the age, and clothed their teachings in the superstitions and erroneous ideas of the day. This theory maintains that there was a condescension to the mistaken ideas of the Jews as was believed necessary to secure reception for the doctrines being taught. The Biblical writers are said to have retained many current beliefs which they themselves believed to be erroneous, in order to prepare the way for a purer system. Christ came to restore the pure religion of nature, but to effect this he retained the existing elements of the Jewish religion, actually giving sanction to erroneous ideas of the people though he knew them mistaken, that He might insinuate among them his own elevated views. At a later time mankind, advanced in knowledge, would be able to strip off the outward shell and find the kernel of Biblical teaching. The age was too rude and barbarous to

⁴⁹Terry, loc. cit. ⁵⁰Ibid., p. 62.

usher in a complete purification, and therefore permitted many errors to remain in the Christian system.⁵¹

This theory maintains that much of what was taught about demons, angels, vicarious and expiatory sacrifice, the Messiah, the resurrection and judgment, and so forth, ". . . are to be regarded as an accommodation to the superstitious notions, prejudices, and ignorance of the times. The supernatural was thus set aside. . . ."⁵² This is, of course, another form of rationalism.

The Moral Method. This method owes its origin to Immanuel Kant. It has a resemblance to the mythological method. The following paragraphs describe its system.

. . . Scripture has for its practical value and purpose the moral improvement of man. Hence, if the literal and historical sense of a given passage yield no profitable moral lesson, such as commends itself to the practical reason, we are at liberty to set it aside, and attach to the words such a meaning as is compatible with the religion of reason. . . . The only real value⁵³ of the Scriptures is to illustrate and confirm the religion of reason.

. . . The moral interpretation consists in educing from the sacred Scriptures such ideas alone as are conformable to the pure principles of practical morality implanted in the bosoms of men. Nothing but the most perfect notions should be found in the written word, since it proceeds from God, with whom all is perfect. The literal exposition is thought to furnish notions less perfect and less worthy of God than the dictates of practical reason allow. Hence, other ideas, more suited to the advancement of morality, are attached to the words of inspiration, although violence is thus done to the historical and literal sense. The only value and object of the Bible is to introduce, illustrate, and confirm the religion of reason, which is supposed to be alone true, and sufficient. This system of philosophy exercises an undue influence on the exegesis of Scripture, moulding and fashioning it in a peculiar manner.⁵⁴

⁵¹Davidson, op. cit., pp. 200-201. ⁵²Terry, op. cit., p. 62.

⁵³Ibid., p. 63. ⁵⁴Davidson, op. cit., p. 193.

It is not difficult to see the weakness of such a method as the moral interpretation of Scripture. It is easy to overlook what the Scriptures teach in order to make them teach the "practical morality" found within the bosom of every man. Thus any Biblical doctrine which, literally interpreted, is not in conformity with this morality, can conscientiously be rejected.

Of this method Terry has stated that:

It is easy to see that such a system of interpretation, which profess-
edly ignores the grammatical and historical sense of the Bible, can have
no reliable or self-consistent rules. Like the mystical and allegorical
methods, it leaves every thing subject to the peculiar faith or fancy of
the interpreter.⁵⁵

The Pietistic Method. This system is extremely subjective. Its
guiding principle in interpretation is that of the "inner light." This method
is based on the faulty interpretation of I John 2:20, 27, which reads:

But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. But
the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you: and ye need
not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all
things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye
shall abide in him."

In this system ". . . the rules of grammar and the common meaning and
usage of words are discarded, and the internal light of the Spirit is held
to be the abiding and infallible Revealer. . . ."⁵⁶ As a result of the "inner
light" the following can be said about this system:

. . . The written word is tacitly supplanted, and the necessity of learn-
ing virtually denied. Impulses of feeling and subjective views are raised
above the literal sense. The right understanding of the holy oracles is

⁵⁵Terry, op. cit., p. 63.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 61.

subordinated to individual impressions. Thus the Quakers, and some of the Pietists in Germany regard the external words of Scripture as incomplete and inefficient, referring everything to that internal light which guides to true faith and a pure morality. Hence the feelings, rather than the understanding, are consulted and followed. . . .⁵⁷

It would be natural to believe that if this "inner light" were the Spirit of God illuminating the Holy Word that the interpretations given to the Word would be agreeable and not contradictory. However, both Terry⁵⁸ and Davidson⁵⁹ have pointed out that the divergent and irreconcilable interpretations given amount to nothing more than subjective ideas of each individual. Interpretations of the wildest sort and fanaticism of the worst degree can develop from such a system of hermeneutics.

Other Methods. Aside from the above mentioned methods, there are other erroneous methods which can be merely mentioned in passing. There is the psychologico-historical method which claims the writers related events according to their belief; truth and reality are to be separated from their impressions, since in some cases they exaggerated various events. Another form of hermeneutics was the Halachic and Hagadic methods which made superfluous meanings out of every particle, every peculiar grammatical form, numerical value of letters, and so forth. Another, the naturalistic method, was an effort to distinguish between what was fact and what was mere opinion. Still another method, the spiritual method, regarded the "inner light" as available to every one to help understand the Scriptures in a spiritual manner. The hierarchial system of hermeneutics affirmed that the true interpre-

⁵⁷Davidson, op. cit., p. 223. ⁵⁸Terry, op. cit., p. 62.

⁵⁹Davidson, loc. cit.

ter of the Scriptures is the Church. The apologetic method, as a reaction to the rationalistic method, insisted that anything and everything in Scripture is to serve as a perfect guide to the world, whether the witch of Endor, Cain, Judas Iscariot, or even the devil himself. The method of Fragmentary interpretation treats the Bible as if it were a mere collection of isolated verses without grammatical and contextual considerations. Another system of hermeneutics, the historical method, studied Scripture primarily for the history of certain people. Typological interpretation expounded the Old Testament as if at every point it foreshadowed the New Testament. The predictive system assumed that the Bible is replete with predictions of future events. Another form of hermeneutics is that of systematized interpretation. This method has treated the Scriptures as if in their present order and arrangement, there is a developed systematized theology. This method neglects the historical setting which brought about certain statements which cannot be accurately interpreted without considering the historical background. It also erroneously, in each instance, interprets all the statements made to New Testament Churches as applying directly to Christians today. The cross reference form of interpretation attempted to find similar passages and explain each in the light of comparable ones. This itself is not an erroneous act, but the principle condemned here is the failure to interpret each passage in its own right before comparing it with similar passages. The method of encyclopedic interpretation treated the Bible as if it directly contained an answer to every possible question which might be raised. Such an attempt at various times has lead to reading into Scripture that which is not there. Literary interpretation is merely examining the Scriptures from the standpoint of great literature.

In all the erroneous methods mentioned the Scriptures have not been allowed to speak for themselves. Practically all these methods, if not all, have no objective foundation, but are built upon rationalistic and subjectivistic bases. However, a study of them is helpful to the interpreter in aiding him to avoid the various errors which have been presented, and thus arrive at a more accurate and correct exegesis of the Scriptures.

With Terry, those of the conservative persuasion can say:

In distinction from all the above-mentioned methods of interpretation, we may name the Grammatico-Historico as the method which most fully commends itself to the judgment and conscience of Christian scholars. Its fundamental principle is to gether from the Scriptures themselves the precise meaning which the writers intended to convey. . . .⁶⁰

What is the grammatico-historical method of interpretation? A description of this method has been given earlier in this chapter. However, its mechanical expression has not yet been discussed. The following section will deal with this aspect of the grammatico-historical method of hermeneutics.

Mechanics of Grammatico-Historical Method

The grammatico-historical principle of interpretation can be said to rest upon the principle of analogy of faith. Analogy of faith, as already seen, rests upon the persuasion that there is nothing in the Scriptures which is contradictory to other parts of Scripture, and also that the Bible is a coherent unified whole in doctrinal truths. Thus one part of the Bible does not teach doctrine which is opposed to the doctrinal teaching of another part.

If the principle of analogy of faith is not true, then the grammatico-historical method of interpretation has no basis upon which to build. For

⁶⁰Terry, op. cit., p. 70.

example, if the principle of analogy of faith is wrong, then grammatically words used one place could have an entirely different, and even contrary meaning in another section. What one writer meant in one place by a word, another could mean exactly the opposite elsewhere. Also, if this principle be erroneous, one would not be bound to interpret the Scriptures in their historical context, and could thus make some passages teach what they would not teach if considered in their historical setting. For instance, when the Apostle Paul told the women to be silent in the Church (I Corinthians 14: 34), it must be remembered that in his day women did not have the freedom then that women have today. It cannot be interpreted as meaning that women today are to be silent in the Church, for this was spoken in consideration of the social pattern of Paul's day, and present day interpretation demands that the historical setting be taken in consideration for honest exegetical results.

It is the opinion of this writer, because of the above facts, that the grammatico-historical method demands the principle of analogy of faith for a basis upon which to build its structure.

The grammatical aspect. In the grammatical aspect of this method it is very important to understand the "usus loquendi" of the inspired authors. This "usus loquendi" is a knowledge of the current usage of words at the time they were employed by the writers of sacred Scripture. It is the knowledge of words in this sense which forms the subject of the grammatical principles recognized and followed by the interpreter. Such a knowledge of words used by an author is the basis of all interpretation.⁶¹ What consti-

⁶¹Davidson, op. cit., p. 227.

tutes the "usus loquendi" of each writer of Scripture? Essentially it is his own individual mode of expression, the utterances of the writer's mental associations. It is these associations which form an author's grammatical principles, and which an interpreter must strive to master.

As words are the individual units which together form a complete thought, it is necessary that a study of Scripture must commence with a study of words. In fact the basic principle of Biblical interpretation is that the grammatical meaning of words convey the sense of Scripture.⁶²

An etymological study of words can be extremely helpful in gaining an understanding of their meaning at the time they were used by writers of Scripture. By such a study one is enabled to arrive at their root meaning and derivative significance. However, too much dependence is not to be put upon the etymological factors in interpretation. The reason is that Scriptural terms in some instances may have far departed from their original roots from which they sprang. Therefore the important factor is the meaning each word had at the time used in both Biblical and non-biblical writings, the Biblical usage being the more important. It is even more necessary to realize the way in which an author of a particular book or group of books may use a term, since all Biblical authors do not use the same word in the same manner.⁶³ This does not mean that one author will use a word as having a meaning which would be contradictory to the meaning of the same word used by another author. It merely means one author may use a certain word one

⁶²Henry, Revelation and the Bible, op. cit., p. 293.

⁶³Trains, op. cit., p. 140.

way whereas another may use the same word in another way, neither ways, however, contradicting one another in meaning.

In the study of words, the object ever before the interpreter is to discover the meaning which the words were originally intended to convey by the writer who used them. Only by such a knowledge can a truthful interpretation be given of passages in which various words needing defining may occur.

However a knowledge of the "*usus loquendi*" of a writer does not eliminate the fact that words must be studied (with their meaning in mind) within the light of their context. The specific meaning of words is not in every instance derived from a mere study of the word itself. Often the specific meaning is determined by the context in which it occurs. Therefore a study of the context is absolutely essential to be sure the interpretation of the words in a passage is correct. By such a study the interpreter will be able to determine whether or not the words are used in their general sense or whether the context indicates a special sense, and whether or not the ideas and thoughts the words express are to have a literal or a figurative interpretation.

Words eventually form a sentence when used in relationship to other words. When this happens a complete unit of thought has been formed. Though the meaning of the words within the body of the sentence must be understood as stated above, that alone is not sufficient. The over-all idea expressed as a result of the blending together of the words must be interpreted. The main idea which a sentence as a whole unit expresses must be determined. Here, too, the laws of grammar apply. Attention must be given to the grammatical construction of sentences for an adequate interpretation. This fact

is adequately expressed by Terry in the following quotation.

. . . The significance of the presence or the absence of the article has often much to do with the meaning of a passage. "In the language of living intercourse," says Winer, "it is utterly impossible that the article should be omitted where it is decidedly necessary, or employed where it is not demanded. . . . can never denote THE mountain, nor

A mountain." . . . The position of words and clauses, and peculiarities of grammatical structure, may often serve to emphasize important thoughts and statements. The special usage of the genitive, the dative, or the accusative case, or of the active, middle, or passive voice, often conveys a notable significance. The same is also true of conjunctions, adverbs, and prepositions. These serve to indicate peculiar shades of meaning, and delicate and suggestive relations of words and sentences, without a nice apprehension of which the real sense of a passage may be lost to the reader. . . .⁶⁴

After having a thorough understanding of its parts and their relation one to the other, the sentence must then be seen in the light of its surrounding context, both the immediate and the remote context. The aim is to align each sentence with the general thought which both precedes and follows its construction. By doing this the various separate thoughts which are presented in any portion of Scripture are related one to the other and are seen to be closely connected together.

The Historical aspect. The second aspect of the grammatico-historical method of interpretation is the historical aspect.

. . . By the historical sense we designate . . . that meaning of an author's words which is required by historical considerations. It demands that we consider carefully the time of the author, and the circumstances under which he wrote.⁶⁵

An interpreter must not only grasp the grammatical import of words and sentences, but he must also be aware of the force of historical circumstances which may have effected the writer and influenced his writings.

⁶⁴Terry, op. cit., p. 106.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 101.

Because the books of the Bible were written in a specific historical setting, and because they were addressed to those who lived in a concrete historical situation, it is imperative that one utilize their historical background if one is to recreate the message of their authors.⁶⁶

The historical situation under which an author wrote must be thoroughly investigated and understood if one is to be able to apply sound hermeneutical principles to Scripture. There are various factors which should be looked at from the historical view. For instance, it must be determined who the author is of the writing under study. The reason for this is that his character, temperament, his mode of thought and expression, personal desires and needs, the age in which the author wrote, the age of the author when he wrote, in short, everything connected with the author as an individual has had an influence on his writing. A knowledge of him as an individual will greatly aid in interpreting his written thoughts.

An intimate acquaintance with the author of a book will facilitate the proper understanding of his words. It will enable the interpreter to surmise, and, perhaps, to establish conclusively, how the words and expressions were born within the soul of the writer; it will illumine certain phrases and sentences in an unexpected way, and make them seem more real as the embodiments of living force. . . .⁶⁷

One must also determine the social circumstances under which an author spoke and wrote. The geographical situation where an author lived, preached, or taught will give light upon certain expressions he used. His physical environment will color certain expressions which he may have used as it will possibly have influenced his thought and mode of statement. Certainly, too, the political situation of the day will have left its mark upon the writer and his statements. The book of Amos clearly reveals how the political situation of his day influenced the literature of this book. The religious

⁶⁶Traina, op. cit., p. 152.

⁶⁷Berkhof, op. cit., p. 117.

circumstances of the day must also be known to understand certain portions of Scripture; a knowledge of the religious institutions and practices of Israel, as regulated by the Mosaic law, is indispensable for sound Biblical interpretation of certain sections of the Bible. Another aspect of historical interpretation is knowing for whom the writing was intended, its original readers. The writer certainly had in mind those influences which affected those whom he wrote and therefore wrote accordingly. No doubt he considered their geographical, historical, and social position, their industrial and commercial relations, their moral and religious character, personal idiosyncrasies, prejudices, peculiar habits of thought, their educational background and social standing. A knowledge of such matters by the interpreter will help to explain many statements which may have been made which otherwise might be unexplainable. The manners, customs, and traditions of the author's day must also be taken into consideration. The purpose and object of the writing must also be taken into account. In short, anything which in anyway might have had an influence upon the writer and his writings must be considered from a historical point of view. Berkhof was correct when he wrote that ". . . it is impossible to understand an author and to interpret his words correctly unless he is seen against the proper historical background" ⁶⁸

As previously stated, the act of interpretation does not make the grammatical and the historical aspects two distinct items. They are both considered together, and together bring forth the original meaning which the

⁶⁸ Berkhof, op. cit., p. 114.

writers intended at the time they wrote. Rightly understood and applied in proper exegetical work, the grammatical and the historical interpretation are synonymous.⁶⁹

Importance of the grammatico-historical method. The importance of the grammatico-historical method lies in the fact that through the application of its principles one should arrive at the proper interpretation of Scripture, assuming, of course, that one correctly applies the principles and also that as much as is possible one comes to the Scriptures with as little theological prejudice as he can. Because this method claims to arrive at the literal truth of Scripture it should lead to uniformity in Biblical teaching and doctrine. This is as it should be for ". . . there is one system of doctrine taught in the Holy Bible and only one. . . ." ⁷⁰ This method, which relies strongly on the principle of analogy of faith, when properly used, should ". . . bind all our theological thinking and interpretation into one well knit system." ⁷¹

When properly and "unprejudicedly" used, the grammatico-historical method of interpretation should eliminate, or resolve into one truth, the many doctrinal variations which exist among different groups in Christendom. If the Bible does have but one system of teaching which does not contradict itself in any manner, then those of different theological persuasions cannot all be correct where it is evident that one system directly opposes another and the two can in no way be reconciled together. Such is seen in the hyper-Calvinistic doctrine of election as opposed to the Arminian doctrine of free

⁶⁹ Davidson, op. cit., p. 226.

⁷⁰ Ramm, op. cit., p. 90.

⁷¹ Ibid.

will. Could both groups cast away all theological prejudices, and thus approach the Scriptures with a fresh mind and properly apply the grammatico-historical principle to them, they would arrive at common doctrinal positions.

The value of the grammatico-historical method of hermeneutics lies in the fact that it claims to be the means of attaining a knowledge of what the Scriptures originally were intended to teach. It is the natural way of allowing the Bible to teach exactly what its writers intended when they wrote it.

Literature of the Bible

The conservative expositor is well aware that the Bible is composed of much diverse literature, and realizes that it must be interpreted accordingly. In interpreting the various literature of the Bible, his object is to discover the literal truth which it embodies. This is done by staying within the proper laws of grammatico-historical interpretation, which might possibly demand a literalistic exposition, but is just as likely to insist upon a figurative explanation. In either case, literalistic or figurative, it is the literal truth which is desired.

Relation of revelation and inspiration to literature. Before moving into a study of the various types of literature found within the Scripture and their modes of interpretation, it would be helpful to delve into the conservative view of revelation and inspiration as they relate to the literature of the Bible.

The conservative exegete is in agreement with Traina who said that apart from a proper allowance for the dual nature of the Scripture sound

Biblical exegesis is impossible.⁷² Both God and man worked together in recording revelation. The revelation was given by the Holy Spirit and received by man. This writer is not implying the dictation theory of revelation-inspiration. This theory is unable to provide an adequate view of the dual nature of the Bible as it relates to the various types of literature found in Scripture. The proper concept, this writer has come to believe, is that in giving His revelation:

. . . God operated through human agents who had certain mental abilities and certain other talents, whose religious experience was of a certain quality, who lived in a certain environment which involved certain geographical, social, political, economic, and religious factors, and who had a certain heritage. And these specific historical factors inevitably had their influence on the writing of Biblical literature.⁷³

Thus the total background and conditioning of the writers of Scripture found its expression in various forms of literature in which the revelation was expressed. This was also the opinion of G.H. Schodde who stated that ". . . the human factor was sufficiently potent to shape the form of thought in the Scriptures . . ."⁷⁴ However, it is not to be implied from this truth that the human element in any way altered the revelation which God gave. The human agents expressed God's thoughts in their own, natural way of expression.

. . . While God is the moving agent and responsible Author, the human writer is his free and conscious instrument, so that the words of Scripture are at one and the same time the consciously self-chosen words of the human writer and the divinely inspired words of the Spirit of God. Thus Scripture is all human and all divine, and this perfect harmony between the divine authorship and the human authorship is secured by inspiration.⁷⁵

⁷²Traina, op. cit., p. 159. ⁷³Traina, op. cit., pp. 159-160.

⁷⁴G.H. Schodde, "Interpretation," International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957) III, 1489.

⁷⁵Henry, Revelation and the Bible, op. cit., p. 223.

Thus God's revelation, through the operation of inspiration upon the hearts and minds of the biblical writers by the Holy Spirit was perfectly and inerrantly recorded. By what has been said, it is not implied that God did not, when He deemed necessary, guide the writers to write word for word His revelation when their own natural ways of expression would not adequately render His message. This would be generally admitted by conservative scholars who flatly reject the mechanical or dictation theory. The essential point at the moment is the fact that God's revelation, given by the Holy Spirit to human agents, found various literary expression in its recorded form.

It is evident that the conservative view of revelation and inspiration does not discount the fact that various types of literature are found in the Scriptures. Because the author's freedom was not interrupted in receiving God's communication, and because he expressed it in his own individual style, it would be only logical to expect different modes of literary expression. And this is exactly what is found in the Bible.

The conservative exegete realizes that correct interpretation of any particular form of literature will depend on the character of that literature. For instance, poetry will not be interpreted according to the same set of rules as will history, which is set forth in prose form; fables would not receive the same rules of interpretation as would types; the Psalms would be interpreted differently than would allegory. The principle involved here is that "the interpretation of any specimen of literature will depend on the character of the work under consideration. . . ." ⁷⁶

⁷⁶Schodde, loc. cit.

Another principle involved is that regardless of the type of literature, the object in its interpretation is to discover its literal truth, and whether the literature be interpreted figuratively or literalistically this goal is constantly before the expositor.

Figurative literature. Much of the literature of the Bible is expressed in figurative language. Berkhof has stated that the reason for the use of figurative language is partly due to the inability of language to express spiritual and heavenly things literally, and also partly due to the Oriental's preference for plastic and pictorial representation, and also a desire for variety and literary beauty.⁷⁷

It has not been the purpose of this writer to give an extended and exhaustive treatment of the various figurative literature about to be discussed. Only what is essential will be presented and wherever possible hermeneutical principles will be stated. This will not always be possible for each form of figurative literature due to the fact that this is one of the weak areas in hermeneutical works dealing with the subject of literature.

Only the more important types of figurative literature has been discussed since ". . . when we have exhausted the list of figures found in our modern books on interpretation, we have not yet found all the figures that are used in the Scriptures. . . ."⁷⁸ The figures under discussion are called tropes, which is a word employed in another than its primary meaning, or a word which is applied to some object different from its application in

⁷⁷Berkhof, op. cit., p. 63.

⁷⁸Dungan, op. cit., p. 227.

common usage.⁷⁹ This is simply a word which is used in a different sense than that which correctly belongs to it. Berkhof has stated that there are only three principal tropes, the metaphor, the metonymy, and the synecdoche, and has therefore treated just these three.⁸⁰ Other authors have treated these plus several others. The tropes listed in this paper are those which have received the most treatment from various authors.

Metaphor. A metaphor is a comparison in which the sense of one object is transferred to another, or asserted to be that other, and perhaps spoken of as if it were that other sense. It is a calling of an object by another term, which term is to point out a characteristic of the object. Thus in Luke 13:31-32, Jesus told the Pharisees what to say to Herod, and in doing so said "go and say to that fox" thus calling Herod a fox, which is a metaphorical statement. The language of the Lord's supper is also that of metaphorical language, as He said "Take, eat, this is my body . . . drink ye all of it; for this is my blood" (Matthew 26:26-28). Metaphorical language is used where the followers of Christ are referred to as the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13-16), where Judah is a lion's whelp (Genesis 49:9), and where Christ is spoken of as a vine, a shepherd, a door, a rock, a fountain, a servant, and so forth. Metaphors are also applied to God in the Scriptures, which is seen in anthropopathisms and anthropomorphisms. By the former human emotions, passions, and desires are attributed to God, and the latter attributes bodily parts and activity to God. Thus God is frequently spoken of as jealous, angry, loving, kind, forgiving and compassionate, and other

⁷⁹Terry, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

⁸⁰Berkhof, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

such expressions. Bodily He is spoken of as having ears and eyes, hands and feet, and as being able to smell and so forth.

In interpretation it is evident that a literalistic exposition of metaphors would be erroneous. However, the forms upon which the figures are based and the literalistic meaning of these forms throw light upon the figurative expression of the metaphor employed. Thus the truth conveyed through the figure of the followers of Christ as being the salt of the earth derives meaning from an understanding of what salt actually is, and what it is is figuratively transferred to what followers of Christ should be. As salt of the earth they are the preserving, seasoning factor among men. And as salt makes one thirsty, so followers of Christ are to cause a thirst for the Christ they represent. The literal truth, then, of a metaphor is discovered in the actual characteristics of the form upon which it is based.

Metonymy. A metonymy is a substitution of one word or name for another. It is the application of the name of one object to another because of relationship. Metonymy indicates relationships such as cause and effect, progenitor and posterity, sign and thing signified, subject and attribute.⁸¹

D.R. Dungan has pointed out that methonymies are capable of various divisions and subdivisions as will enable the proper principles for the exposition of passages containing it. He mentioned three such forms, that of metonymy of the cause, metonymy of the subject, and metonymy of the adjunct.⁸²

The following statements are ideas largely gained from the above author.

By the metonymy of a cause, the cause is stated while the effect is

⁸¹Ibid. ⁸²Dungan, op. cit., pp. 271-314.

intended. For instance, God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are frequently mentioned, whereas the result of their work intended is the redemption of the world, or parents are put for their children, or authors for the works which they have produced, or instruments for their effects. Luke 16:39 is an illustration of the above, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." Here Moses and the prophets are mentioned, but what is referred to is their writings. The writers themselves had been dead for many centuries; however, they were the cause of the writings which the people possessed.

In the metonymy of the subject the subject is announced, while some circumstance or property belonging to it is referred to. These things are meant, but the subject is named. For instance, in Deut. 6:5 it is stated, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart"; here the word "heart" is named, but what is meant is that condition which comes out of the heart, namely the affections. Another instance is the frequent times in which the church is presented under the figure of a body—the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The metonymy of adjunct is a form of speech in which the adjunct is put for the subject. For instance, circumcision and uncircumcision in the Scriptures stand for Jews and Gentiles. The "outer darkness" of Matthew 22:13 refers to the place of darkness, in which case the quality of the place having been given for the place itself.

Synecdoche. A synecdoche is the use of a part for the whole or the whole for a part, definite for an indefinite, a species for a genus or a genus for a species, an individual for a class or a class for an individual, a singular for a plural or a plural for a singular. An example of this

is seen in the following paragraph.

. . . Jephthah is said to have been buried "in the cities of Gilead" (Judg. 12:7, when, of course, only one city was meant). When the prophet says in Dan. 12:2: "And many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall ⁸³awake," he certainly did not intend to teach a partial resurrection . . .

Fable. "A Fable is an analogy presented in fancied words and acts of beings not possessing reason. . . ." ⁸⁴ A fable consists of treating animals and of animate and inanimate objects as if they were endowed with reason and speech, which is contrary to their nature. The purpose of the fable is to set forth a moral principle or truth. There are only two proper fables that appear in the Bible, that of Jotham and that of Jehoshaphat. ⁸⁵ The oldest fable recorded in the Scripture is that of Jotham's fable found in Judges 9:7-20. This fable represents trees as going forth to choose and anoint a king. The fable of Jehoshaphat, King of Israel, is found in II Kings 14:9. This fable concerns the answer of Jehoshaphat to the warlike challenge of Amaziah, King of Judah, which tells of the thornbush's demand of the cedar. It is seen through these two instances that fables have no foundation in fact, but yet present obvious truths to be applied by those who hear and understand its teachings.

. . . In the interpretation of these one should guard against pressing the imagery too far. We are not to suppose that every word and allusion has some special meaning. . . . We should always keep in mind that it is one distinguishing feature of fables that they are not exact parallels of those things to which they are designed to be applied. They are based on imaginary actions of irrational creatures, or inanimate things, and

⁸³Berkhof, op. cit., p. 85.

⁸⁴Clinton Lockhart, Principles of Interpretation (Des Moines: The Christian Index Publishing Co., 1901), p. 195.

⁸⁵Terry, op. cit., p. 179.

can therefore never be true to actual life.⁸⁶

Hyperbole. The hyperbole is a rhetorical figure of exaggeration. It consists in magnifying or diminishing an object beyond its natural dimensions or beyond reality. It is an exaggeration for emphasis. Thus it is stated in II Samuel 1:23, in speaking of Saul and Jonathan, "they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions." Judges 7:12 describes the appearance of the many camps of the Midianites and Amalekites as follows: "lying in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and as to their camels, no number, like the sand which is upon the shore of the sea for multitude."

There need be no rule for the interpretation of the hyperbole, except to keep before the mind the purpose of the author, and the language will interpret itself. It is simply an intensification, and not used with any intent to misrepresent the facts in the case. Of course, to make these statements literal will find the Bible guilty of many falsehoods; but when we treat such figures in the Scriptures as we treat them elsewhere, there is no danger of failing to comprehend them.⁸⁷

Personification. Personification is attributing to inanimate objects animate attributes, and are spoken of as if endowed with life and volition. It is also an attributing to animals feelings which only man possesses. This figure of speech is seen in Numbers 16:31-32, where it is stated that "the earth opened her mouth." In Habakkuk 3:10 it is stated that "the mountains saw thee, and were afraid . . . the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high."

Apostrophe. This figure is closely connected with that of personification. It signifies a speaker turning away from his real audience and

⁸⁶ Ibid. ⁸⁷ Dungan, op. cit., pp. 321-322.

addressing an imaginary one, or an absent person or thing. When it is an imaginary inanimate world addressed, it is more correctly called personification. When addressed to an absent, imaginary animate world, then it is apostrophe. In II Samuel 18:33, David uses this expression when he wept for his dead son Absalom, saying to no living person, "O my son Absalom, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" The apostrophe found in Isaiah 14:19-20, where the prophet addresses the fallen king of Babylon, is the finest and boldest apostrophe found in the Bible.⁸⁸

Allegory. The commonly accepted definition of an allegory is that it is an extended metaphor.

Some have objected to calling an allegory a continued metaphor. . . . Who shall say, they ask, where the one ends and the other begins? But the very definition should answer this question. When the metaphor is confined to a single word or sentence it is improper to call it an allegory . . . But when it is extended into a narrative, and its imagery is drawn out in many details and analogies, yet so as to accord with the one leading figure, it would be improper to call it a metaphor. . . .⁸⁹

What is allegory?

. . . The allegory is a figurative use and application of some supposable fact or history . . . The allegory is continually using words in a metaphorical sense, and its narrative, however supposable in itself, is manifestly fictitious.⁹⁰

Allegories are to be found in the Bible. One of the most notable is found in Psalm 80:8-15, in which a vine from Egypt is replanted in a new land, where its growth was tremendous and it soon covered the entire land, and it is mistreated by the people of the land, and therefore, because God planted it He comes to its rescue. This, of course, relates to an experience of the

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 323.

⁸⁹ Terry, op. cit., pp. 214-215.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 214.

nation Israel. In Galatians 4:21-31 the history of Abraham is used to present analogies which show the attitude of both Jews and Gentiles towards the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is the allegory of old age in Ecclesiastes 12:3-7, which contains the figure of a house about to fall in ruins. In Ezekiel 12:10-15 is set forth allegorically the work of the false prophets in Israel, and the ruin of both the prophets and the people are discussed. In I Corinthians 3:10-15 is found the allegory of foundations, Christ and elements of the world. The allegory of leaven is found in I Corinthians 5:6-8. In Ephesians 6:11-17 is the vivid allegory of the Christian armour and conflict. Many more allegories are to be found in Scripture.

Allegory contains its own interpretation within itself, and the thing which is signified is identified with the image.⁹¹ That which is allegorized is its literal meaning, or the truth it wishes to convey. In interpreting allegorical passages rich in meaning Terry has stated that:

. . . the great hermeneutical principles to be carefully adhered to are, first, to grasp the one great idea of the whole passage, and, second, to avoid the temptation of seeking manifold meanings in the particular figures. By the minute search for some special significance in every allusion the mind becomes wearied and overcrowded with the particular illustrations, so as to be likely to miss entirely the great thought which should be kept mainly in view.⁹²

Manifold meanings will not be sought when it is remembered that allegory has but one meaning,⁹³ and not two as Davidson suggested.⁹⁴

There are no separate and special rules for the interpretation of the allegorical portions of the Scriptures. The essential thing to remember is that allegory should be interpreted on the same general principles as meta-

⁹¹Ibid. ⁹²Ibid., pp. 219-220. ⁹³Ibid., p. 215.

⁹⁴Davidson, op. cit., p. 306.

phorical interpretation.⁹⁵

Riddles. A riddle is an analogy which is designed to puzzle and perplex the hearers. It is purposely obscure in order that the sharpness of understanding of those who hear might be tested. They are dark sayings, enigmas, which have a hidden meaning behind them. They are analogous in their interpretation. In the Old Testament is the riddle found in Ezekiel 17:3-21 which tells of the eagle taking the top of the cedar of Lebanon and carrying its seed into another land, and was then attacked by an eagle of that land. Various analogies are drawn from this riddle which set forth events of the political situation of that day. A New Testament riddle is that of the mystic number of the beast in Revelation 13:18.

Parallelism. The reason for listing parallelism as a figure of speech is because Dungan stated that he felt it properly belongs here, although it is treated in various other places by other writers.⁹⁶

Parallel passages are not passages whose parts exactly correspond to each other, but are passages which have something in common, especially words or thoughts that are the same.

Though parallelism chiefly belongs to the poetic and prophetical writings of the Old Testament, it is still to be found in the New Testament. It is frequently found in the Apocalypse, and occasionally it is introduced in other parts, as in Luke 1:42,46,47,51-53; 2:14. Examples of poetic parallelism are of frequent occurrence in the writings of St. John, where the same

⁹⁵Berkhof, op. cit., p. 89.

⁹⁶Dungan, op. cit., p. 332.

idea is frequently stated both negatively and positively, i.e., John 1:20; I John 3:5,14; 5:12, "he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." In II Timothy 2:13 the same negative-positive emphasis can be found.

Davidson has pointed out that parallels have been usually divided into two kinds, verbal and real.⁹⁷ Verbal parallels refer to words and phrases and real parallels to facts or doctrines. When the same or similar words and phrases occur in various places, and are clearly related to each other by the scope, connexion, or the adjuncts they are verbal parallels. Real parallels are passages which have similar meaning in terms of facts, subjects, sentiments, or doctrines, and not in words or phrases, as do verbal parallels.

Davidson has offered the following principles of interpretation of parallels.

The first duty of the interpreter, in reference to the exegetical use of parallelism, is to ascertain the fundamental idea of the sentence in which that feature appears. In the next place, the parts or members should be minutely examined. There are two extremes into which expositors may fall. The first was exemplified by the older interpreters, who proceeded on the assumption, that each hemistich had its peculiar meaning distinct from the other, because numerous repetitions of the same sentiment in corresponding terms, were thought to be unbecoming the wisdom of the Spirit. Hence various artificial and arbitrary devices, such as emphases and the like, were adopted, in order to carry out the idea of diversity and distinctness of sense. . . . The other extreme like in supposing, that there is a mere tautology, the same idea being contained in two or more parallel members, without perceptible variation in strength or application. It is a mistake, however, to imagine, that there is an actual or complete identity in the meaning of two hemistichs; or that an expression in one, is just the same as its counterpart in the other. There is no useless tautology even in those parallel members that have been denominated synonymous. The same idea indeed lies at the foundation of both; but some variety will be found in its expansion. Sometimes the one member expresses a thing affirmatively, the other the same negatively;

⁹⁷Davidson, op. cit., pp. 246-247.

the one figuratively, the other literally; the one has a comparison, the other its application; the one contains a fact, the other, the manner in which it took place.⁹⁸

Terry is of the opinion that parallel passages are so important that without them there would be some words and statements in Scripture which would be scarcely intelligible.⁹⁹

Parable. The oldest and most common of all figures of speech is the parable.¹⁰⁰ The meaning of the word "parable" implies a placing of one thing by the side of another for the purpose of comparison. It is a symbolic method of speech, in which something which could actually have happened in true life is used as a means of conveying a moral truth. There is nothing portrayed in the story which could not actually have happened at some time or another. Yet the stories are not claimed as actually having happened, that is, they have no actual historical basis. The object and design of parables is to set forth, in an impressive and interesting form of speech, ideas and moral truths which are to be applied to life by the hearers. The earthly, practical element of the parable bears an analogical relationship to the spiritual element or truth being illustrated.

Berkhof has mentioned three elements which must be taken into consideration before attempting an exposition of parables. The first is the scope of the parable, or that which is to be illustrated. This is finding the purpose of the parable, or what it is attempting to accomplish. This is discovering the spiritual lesson which it is attempting to teach. At times this purpose

⁹⁸Ibid., pp. 233-234. ⁹⁹Terry, op. cit., p. 119.

¹⁰⁰Dungan, op. cit., p. 227.

is easily understood by indications within the parable itself, but at other times a careful examination of the context is necessary. Secondly, the figurative representation of the parable must be discovered. This is an analyzation of the narrative itself, and all the available knowledge such as geography, archaeology, and historical light must be brought to bear upon it. Thirdly, the exact point of comparison at which the parable is pointing should be discovered. There is always some special "thing" or "object" with which the parable is dealing. This is its central idea. Unless this be discovered the rest of the parable cannot be properly understood and the individual traits correctly interpreted.¹⁰¹

Ramm has stated seven rules for interpreting parables which seem to be fairly comprehensive of what various other writers have said on this subject. Though he has largely parables of the New Testament in view, most of what he said could be applied to parables of the Old Testament.

(1). Determine the exact nature and details of the customs, practices, and elements that form the material or natural part of the parable. . . .

(2). Determine the one central truth the parable is attempting to teach. . . .

(3). Determine how much of the parable is interpreted by the Lord Himself. . . .

(4). Determine if there are any clues in the context as to the parable's meaning. In Luke 15 occurs the triadic parable of the lost sheep, coin, and son. The interpretative context is Luke 15:1-2, "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured saying "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." This means that the parable is our Lord's justification for eating with sinners and publicans. Therefore, the shepherd, the woman, and the father represent the attitude of love, redemption, and forgiveness in Christ; the lost sheep, coin, and son represent the publicans and sinners who

¹⁰¹ Berkhof, op cit., pp. 100-101.

gathered round our Lord.

.....

(5). Don't make a parable walk on all fours. . . .¹⁰²

Concerning this last point, Terry has pointed out that there are two extremes which should be avoided. The one extreme is the attempt to discover hidden meanings in every word of the parable, and the other extreme is the opposite, that of passing over many details as mere rhetorical figures. As a general rule, Terry stated, most of the details in a parable have a meaning, and those details which have no special significance for exegetical work, do, however, enhance the force and beauty of the rest of the parable.¹⁰³

Ramm's two remaining points for the interpretation of parables are stated in the following paragraphs.

(6). Be careful of the doctrinal use of parables. Any use of a parable for doctrinal purposes must observe historical sense. There is the danger of reading our own theological debates back into the parables foisting meanings upon the parable that were never intended. The primary meaning of the parable is what the parable obviously meant to the people of the time the parable was given. . . .

Parables do teach doctrine and the claim that they do not is an overstatement. But only that may be gleaned from the parable what it immediately teaches, or what is in harmony with the analogy of faith. . . .

(7). A clear understanding of the time-period that many of the parables are intended for is necessary for their full interpretation. The parables are for that period between the two advents during which the King has gone into a far country to receive a kingdom. It is not, therefore, a period in which all is either entirely good or wholly bad. The pessimism and the optimism of the parables must be adjusted to each other. . . .¹⁰⁴

The above figurative language, that of the metaphor, the metonymy, the fable, the hyperbole, the apostrophe, personification, allegory, riddle,

¹⁰²Ramm, op. cit., pp. 179-181.

¹⁰³Terry, op. cit., p. 198.

¹⁰⁴Ramm, op. cit., pp. 183-184.

parallelism, and the parable, is frequently called "figures of speech." The above list by no means exhausts all of the figures of speech found within Scripture. There is also another type of figurative language found within the Bible, and that is called "figures of thought." Typology and symbols are two prominent forms of this latter division of the figurative language found within Scripture. Just as the figurative forms already listed did not exhaust all the figures of speech, so typology and symbols do not exhaust all the figures of thought to be found within the Bible.

Typology. Essentially the word "type" means "likeness."

. . . In the science of theology it properly signifies the preordained representative relation which certain persons, events, and institutions of the Old Testament bear to corresponding persons, events, and institutions in the New. . . . ¹⁰⁵

In typology there is what is known as the "type" and the "antitype." The "type" is the original image. The "antitype" is that which bears a likeness to the original image, the "type." As typology is essentially the idea that things and persons in the New Testament are symbolized or prefigured by persons or things in the Old, then those persons or things in the Old Testament are the "types." Thus Jonah, who was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, was an Old Testament type of Christ, Who was three days and nights in the heart of the earth, and Who thus was the antitype (Matthew 12:40).

Terry listed three things which are essential to make a person or an event the type of another person or event. The first essential is that there

¹⁰⁵Terry, op. cit., p. 246.

must be a notable point of analogy or resemblance between the two, though there may be, and probably will be, points of difference. The antitype is to be of a higher and nobler character than the type, i.e., Christ, the great high Priest, is of higher character, etc., than that of Aaron the high priest, who is a type of Christ. Secondly, there must be evidence that God designed and appointed the type to represent the thing typified. The type as well as the antitype must have been preordained by God. There should be substantial evidence of divine intention between the two, though such evidence must not in every case formally and directly be admitted or affirmed in Scriptures, though the evidence for its being a type is to rest upon Scripture itself. The third essential is that every type must prefigure something in the future. The Old Testament, which contains many types of unfulfilled events, blossoms in its antitypes which it has long pointed toward.¹⁰⁶

Typology is extremely important to the interpreter of Scripture. The reason for this is well given by Kevan, who stated that it is the unifying principle between the Old and New Testaments.

There is deep harmony and unity between the Old and the New Testaments; though written in different tongues they speak a common theological language. They speak the same truths, but what was in outline in the one is fully-painted in the other; what was shadow in the former is substance in the latter; what was typified in the Old is realized in the New. The unifying principle of interpretation is the homological typology; that is to say, the clearly discernible prearrangement of things in the one dispensation "corresponds" to things in the other. It is on the principle of homology that the entire Bible may be said to be a Christian book.¹⁰⁷

Dungan listed seven kinds of types to be found in the Old Testament.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 247-248.

¹⁰⁷ Henry, Revelation and the Bible, op. cit., p. 295.

A knowledge of these is necessary for the interpreter to capably approach Old Testament truths which are typified in the New Testament. The first listed is typical persons. Persons are considered typological due to some relation, characteristic, or office. Thus Adam was a type of Christ in that he is the federal head of the race (Romans 5:12-19). Secondly, there are typical things. They are types because divinely appointed to represent the coming Messiah. Thus the brazen serpent represented Christ when lifted up, or lambs slain for sacrifice represented the great sacrifice of the Lamb of God, and so forth. Thirdly, there are typical institutions. Sacrifices represented the coming atonement of the Saviour; the sabbath was a type of the Christian's rest in Christ; cities of refuge were a type of the refuge found in Christ, etc. The fourth kind of type listed was that of typical offices. Every prophet, priest, and king in some way served a purpose which answered to some particular work of the Saviour. The fifth is that of typical conduct. Isaiah walking naked and barefooted not only symbolized the condition of the people, but also foretold a coming event. Typical events is the sixth kind of type. I Corinthians 10:1-10 states that the passage through the Red Sea was a type of Christian baptism. The last kind of type is that of typical places. The greatest would probably be the tabernacle, which has various typical representations, another is Egypt, which is made to typify bondage to sin, and fleeing from it represents a deliverance.¹⁰⁸

Berkhof stated that the same general rules apply to typological interpretation as applies to the parables. However, he stated that there are

¹⁰⁸Dungan, op. cit., pp. 362-368.

certain principles to be kept in mind in interpreting typological matters. First, he stated that the mistake should be guarded against making a thing which is in and of itself evil to be a type of that which is good and pure. Secondly, because Old Testament types were both symbols and types they were first of all symbols expressive of spiritual truth. Therefore the types symbolized for the Israelites the same truth it conveys for today, except the anti-type of today is that same truth raised to a higher level. Therefore the symbol must be studied, and it must be settled what moral or spiritual truth the type conveyed to the Israelites. Then the interpreter is free to state how this truth is realized on a higher plane in the antitype. The third rule is that the New Testament must be turned to for a real insight into the truth which was typified in the Old Testament. The New Testament removes the shadow and reveals the type by the bright glow of the antitype. Fourthly, it is a fundamental principle that unless a type is of a complex nature, there is but one radical meaning to each type. The fifth and last rule states that it is necessary to take into consideration the essential differences between the type and the antitype. The one represents truth on a higher scale than the other.¹⁰⁹

Symbols. Types and symbols resemble each other in that each are representations of moral and religious truth. In each, material objects are made to convey to the mind vivid spiritual conceptions. Though there are points of resemblance between types and symbols, they differ noticeably in special method and design. Symbolism can be seen in the bread and wine

¹⁰⁹ Berkhof, op. cit., pp. 145-147.

which are symbols of the body and blood of Christ, and the rainbow is a symbol of the covenanted mercy and faithfulness of God (Genesis 10:13-16). The fundamental difference between a type and a symbol is that a symbol, though it may represent a thing of the past, present, or future, has no predictive element in it, whereas a type is essentially a representative, or a prefiguring, of something which is future. In this sense it has reference to time, for it is a foreshadowing of events as yet unfulfilled in the future. A symbol, however, has no essential reference to time. The purpose of the symbol is mainly to represent some character, office, or quality, as for instance that of a horn representing strength or a king in whom strength resides (Daniel 7:24; 8:21).¹¹⁰

A symbol is a figurative expression which is used to represent something else. The symbol has moral and religious significance. The Bible is full of various symbols. For example, the cherubim and flaming sword placed at the east of Eden (Genesis 2:24), the burning bush at Horeb (Exodus 3:2), and the pillars of cloud and fire which went before the Israelites (Exodus 13:21) were all of symbolic significance.

The words which are used as symbols of something else are to be understood literally. For instance, Ezekiel saw a resurrection of dry bones, though what was symbolized was the restoration of Israel from the lands of their exile. The name of the symbol, dry-bones, is to be taken literally, though it itself is a symbol of something else. It is with this in mind that Terry has laid down three principles of symbolism, which are:

¹¹⁰Terry, op. cit., pp. 244-246.

. . . (1) The names of symbols are to be understood literally; (2) the symbols always denotes something essentially different from themselves; and (3) some resemblance, more or less minute, is traceable between the symbol and the things symbolized.¹¹¹

Ramm suggested the following hermeneutical principles for symbols:

. . . (1). Those symbols interpreted by the Scriptures are the foundation for all further studies in symbolism. Ferocious beasts are clearly interpreted as cruel and wicked political leaders. The lamb is interpreted as the animal of sacrifice. . . .

(2). Where the symbol is not interpreted, investigate the context, or passages that deal with the same symbol. . . .

(3). Often the symbol is interpreted by its very nature. . . .

(4). Be aware of double imagery in symbols. There is nothing in symbols that compels each symbol to have one, and only one, interpretation. Thus at the same time the lion is a symbol of Christ and Satan. Water means the "word" in Ephesians 5:26, the Spirit in I Cor. 12:13, and regeneration in Titus 3:5. . . .

(5). Keep good sense in symbolism. Be careful of ignoring the context in which a symbol occurs.¹¹² . . .

Other literature. Having discussed the figurative literature of the Bible, other literature will now be examined. Here, too, the purpose is not to give an extensive and detailed study of the different literature, nor to even discuss the totality of the many other types, not yet mentioned, found in the Bible. The object is rather to concisely relate several types as examples of other literature found in the Scripture, and then state whatever hermeneutical principles as is possible for the various types of literature to be discussed.

History. A study of the Old Testament makes it evident that there is

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 266.

¹¹² Ramm, op. cit., pp. 148-149.

literature in the Bible which is historical. Richard G. Moulton lists the following divisions of history in the Old Testament. The first period is known as the "primitive" period of history. This is found in the book of Genesis, where the first beginnings of the world occupy eleven of its chapters, and the rest of the book is occupied with the succession of the patriarchs. Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers also deals with the history of the nation Israel, and describes the migration of the nation to the time of the arrival at the land of promise. This second period is called "constitutional history," pertaining to the successive revelations of the law, and the wandering in the wilderness following the law. Another period relates to the various efforts of the Israelite nation towards secular government. This is found in Joshua, Judges, and I Samuel, and is known as "incidental history." It was a period of transition and tentative rule. The settlement of the monarch is marked by the accession of King David, and the period extending from this point of time to the Captivity is narrated in the second book of Samuel and first and second Kings. Moulton called this period "regular history," in which the reigns of kings are described. Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah carries the history forward as far as the return of the Exiles to Jerusalem. This fifth period is known as a period of "ecclesiastical history."

Moving into the New Testament, Moulton stated that the ecclesiastical history of the Jewish Church in the Old Testament is continued in the New Testament by a counterpart in the historical works connected with the foundation of Christianity. In the sense that the writers of the Gospels gave the Church the authorities for the acts and words of their Founder these books of the New Testament are historical. The book of Acts, of course, relates

definite historical material, and tells of the spread and founding of the Church of Christ.¹¹³

Laura H. Wild has stated that there are three main types of history to be found in the Bible. The first is purely descriptive, the object seemingly being that of enabling those who read over history to vividly see just what took place. Paul's shipwreck in Acts chapter twenty-seven is an example of this descriptive type of history recorded in Scripture. The second type is didactic. This is a presentation of events in such a way as to show a lesson which the writer believed needed to be shown. This can be done in various ways, such as stress, emphasis upon certain parts of the story, or emphasis upon certain characters and their actions and consequences, and so forth. This can be seen in the story of the reign of Josiah, showing his reform and cleansing of the temple. The third type is called genetic or scientific history. This history deals with the showing of causes for events of consequences of certain actions. This is illustrated in Acts 15:1-35, which shows the council of Jerusalem and its consequences.¹¹⁴

Poetry. Much of the Old Testament is composed in a language which is not prose, but is poetry. In fact, nearly one-half of the Old Testament is written in poetry.¹¹⁵ While this is true of the Old Testament, the opposite is true of the New Testament, for there is practically no poetry

¹¹³Richard G. Moulton, The Literary Study of the Bible (Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., Publishers, 1895), pp. 244-252.

¹¹⁴Laura H. Wild, A Literary Guide to the Bible (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1922), pp. 112-118.

¹¹⁵Terry, op. cit., p. 144.

there.¹¹⁶ Because of this fact the Old Testament will receive the greater consideration under this division.

In most languages, poetry is distinguished from prose by metre, or measure, which is the system by which verses are formed. However, this is not true of Hebrew poetry. Its metre is not that of syllables, but rather that of sentences and sentiments. Its metre is based on the number of words used to form a line, which is seldom ever reproduced in the English translations of the Bible.¹¹⁷

It is important to realize that poetry in the Old Testament belongs to several different periods which are separated by many centuries. This is true from the Song of Deborah in Judges 5, the earliest Hebrew poem, down to the last hymns in the Psalter. The later poems are not as subjective and the poet is much more conscious, and the poetry is more artistic,¹¹⁸ though less creative and more mechanical.

In understanding Hebrew poetry it is extremely important to understand the poet himself, which is to know the ancient Hebrew individual. Such individuals were extremely interested in themselves and in their nation. They had strong passions which were quickly and spontaneously expressed. The poets were no different, and they wrote under strong impulses which were usually religious. No objective standard was recognized when giving expression to the emotions. In the poetry the poets sing of their own experiences and their national circumstances. But, as many authors have pointed out,

¹¹⁶T. Witten Davies, "Poetry, Hebrew" The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957) IV, 2410.

¹¹⁷Lockhart, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

¹¹⁸Davies, op. cit., p. 2412.

though personal experiences were frequently related, the poet is conscious of his fellow man, and of his solidarity with those of his nation, and mankind as a whole. He is not just expressing his own individual desires, but through his personal experiences he is expressing the sorrows and joys, heartaches and happiness, not only of his own person, but of mankind in general. Therefore, because of such characteristics, the largest part of the Hebrew poetry is lyric poetry, which is short poems which give expression to the writer's own feelings, though speaking to and for all mankind.¹¹⁹

T. Witton Davies has listed four divisions under which Biblical poetry could be classified. The first division is folklore, in which the inspiration of the poetry is instantaneous and spontaneous. Such can be found in Genesis 11:1-9 and 19:24. The second grouping is that of prophetic poetry. This poetry is the expression of the inspiration under which the prophet wrote. The third classification is philosophical poetry. Poetry of this sort is found in the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament. The last division is lyric poetry.¹²⁰

There is some poetry in the New Testament, though it is mostly quotations from the Old.

. . . Of original poetry we have but few examples in the New Testament, but these are of the highest quality. In the Gospel of Luke appear what have been called the first Christian hymns. In addition to the Ave Maria of the Roman Church, the annunciation to Mary (1.28-33), and the Gloria in Excelsis of all Christendom, the angelic salutation which heralded the advent of Jesus (2.14), we have the Benedictus, or song of Zacharias (1.68-79), the Magnificat, or the song of the Virgin Mary (1.46-55), and

¹¹⁹Kathleen E. Innes, The Bible as Literature (London: Jonathan Cape, 1930), p. 54.

¹²⁰Davies, op. cit., pp. 2413-2414.

the Hunc Dimittis, or the son of Simeon (2.29-32). . . . In the broader significance of poetry, which subordinates form to spirit or altogether disregards mechanical construction, Jesus may be classed among the poets, and surely Paul's Ode to Love in I Cor. 13, and much of his discussion of the resurrection in the fifteenth chapter of the same epistle must be regarded as poetry in essence, though not in form.¹²¹

The distinguishing feature of Hebrew poetry is that of parallelism.

The large portions of Hebrew Scripture, regarded as poetry, are capable of being arranged into parallelism. This is especially true due to the short and vivid sentences used by the Hebrew poets.¹²² This parallelism is the most fundamental characteristic of Hebrew poetry.¹²³

Berkhof has listed Bishop Lowth's three distinguished kinds of parallelisms, plus a fourth which was added by Jebb. The first was that of synonymous parallelism, in which the same idea is repeated but in a different form. Antithetic parallelism was the second type. In this parallelism the obverse side of a thought is given by the second member of a line or verse. Synthetic parallelism was the third, in which the second member either adds something new to the first or explains it. The last parallelism was the chiasitic, which is parallelism in reverse order which is done by chiasitically arranging the hemistichs of the members (Proverbs 23:15,16; 10:4,5; 13:24).¹²⁴

In studying the nature of Hebrew poetry, it becomes evident that such would seldom be the object of a literal mode of interpretation. This is especially true when one recalls that the emotions, rather than concrete

¹²¹George P. Eckman, The Literary Primacy of the Bible (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1915), p. 74.

¹²²Terry, op. cit., p. 145. ¹²³Wild, op. cit., p. 123.

¹²⁴Berkhof, op. cit., pp. 63-64.

rational fact, were the object of expression.

Clinton Lockhart has given three rules for the interpretation of poetry. The first was that in poetry, the interpreter must be mindful of the conditions which gave rise to various peculiarities of poetry, such as some which may be divided into paragraphs corresponding to the several letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Often each paragraph may begin every verse with the same letter, and thus a transposition was necessary to do this, which the interpreter must realize. The second rule was that a passage of poetry must be interpreted in harmony with its artistic character. Making allowance in the interpretation for the emotion of the poet was the third rule.¹²⁵ Traina stated another fact which is helpful in interpretation, when he said that being aware of the use of parallelism is of much help in reaching a correct exposition of poetry.¹²⁶

Psalms. The Psalms are the most advanced and highly wrought poems in Hebrew literature.¹²⁷ They are composed of two types of poetry, lyric and didactic. God gave instruction to the poet in the didactic and addressed Himself to the understanding. Through the emotions and spiritual experiences of the poet God revealed Himself in the lyric poems.¹²⁸ The lyric by far composes most of the poetry in the book of Psalms.

That which has previously been said for lyric poetry and the vivid personal experiences of the poet under the above topic of poetry can also be repeated concerning the poetry in the Psalms.

¹²⁵Lockhart, op. cit., pp. 224-227. ¹²⁶Traina, op. cit., p. 70.

¹²⁷Innes, op. cit., p. 68. ¹²⁸Berkhof, op. cit., p. 154.

To the interpretation of the Psalms it is extremely important to give consideration to their background which has caused them to come into being, especially from the personal standpoint of the author. His previous contacts, the influences and external circumstances which he was under, all play a strong part in giving mould and fashion to his thoughts and feelings, which bear upon the scope and design of his subject, and give meaning and pertinency to his words. The interpreter must transpose himself back to his condition and completely identify himself with the author.¹²⁹

Berkhof has listed five principles or rules for the interpretation of the Psalms which are found in the following statements.

a. If there was a historical occasion for the composition of a psalm, this should be carefully studied. . . .

b. Because the psalms are far more subjective than other parts of the Bible, the psychological element is important for their correct interpretation. The interpreter should study the character of the poet and the frame of mind in which he composed his song.

c. In view of the fact that the psalms are not purely individual, but largely communal, they must be regarded as utterances of the regenerate heart, of the life that is born from God; and the interpreter should not rest satisfied until he understands how they, too, reveal God's will.

d. In the interpretation of the Messianic psalms, a careful distinction must be made between psalms or parts of the psalms that are directly, and those that are indirectly Messianic. While the former, such as Pss. 2, 22, 45, 110, are directly Messianic, the latter, such as 72 and 89, apply first of all to the poet or some other Old Testament saint, and only, through him as an intervening type, in the second place, to Christ Since the Messianic psalms are prophetic, special attention should be paid to the quotations from them in the New Testament, and to the New Testament realization of their predictions.

e. In connection with the so-called "Imprecatory Psalms," or, perhaps better, imprecations in the psalms, certain facts should be taken into consideration.

¹²⁹Ferry, op. cit., p. 131.

- (1) Orientals love the concrete, and therefore sometimes represent sin in the concrete form of the sinner.
- (2) These imprecations embody the desire of the Old Testament saints for the vindication of the righteousness and holiness of God.
- (3) They are not utterances of personal vindictiveness, but of the Church's aversion to sin, embodied in the sinner.
- (4) They are, at the same time, a revelation of God's attitude to those who are hostile to Him and His Kingdom.¹³⁰

Proverbs. A proverb may be regarded as a short and pithy sentence which contains a complete and valuable thought. The general form of proverbs is poetic, and the usual methods of Hebrew parallelism is followed.¹³¹ Proverbs express in memorable form a moral lesson, wise counsel, or an experience which has suggestive implications. Essentially the writings consist of reflections on life and human affairs.

In the Bible proverbs are not confined solely to the book which bears that title. They are to be found in almost every part of the Scriptures.

Terry has given four rules which are important for the exposition of proverbs. They are as follows.

1. As proverbs may consist of simile, metaphor, parable, or allegory, the interpreter should, first of all, determine to which of these classes of figures, if to any, the proverb properly belongs. . . .

2. Great critical and practical sagacity is also necessary both to determine the character of a proverb and to apprehend its scope and bearing. Many proverbs are literal statements of fact, the results of observation and experience . . . Many are simple precepts and maxims of a virtuous life, or warnings against sin . . . But there are other proverbs that seem to defy all critical sharpness and ingenuity . . . Amid such a diversity of possible constructions the sagacious critic will be slow to venture a positive judgment. He will consider how many such obscure sayings have arisen from events now utterly forgotten. . . . among so many proverbs as have been preserved . . . there are probably some which can not be only conjecturally explained.

¹³⁰ Berkhof, op. cit., pp. 156-157.

¹³¹ Terry, op. cit., p. 238.

3. Wherever the context lends any help to the exposition of a proverb great deference is to be paid to it, and it is to be noted that in the Book of Proverbs, as in the other Scriptures, the immediate context is, for the most part, a very safe guide to the meaning of each particular passage. . . .

4. But there are passages in the Book of Proverbs where the context affords no certain or satisfactory help. There are passages that seem at first self-contradictory, and we are obliged to pause awhile to judge whether the language be literal or figurative. . . .¹³²

Prophecy. Prophecy is not primarily a prediction of future events. The prophet, essentially, is an announcer of a divine message, which may refer to either the past, the present, or the future. It may be put forth as either a rebuke, a warning, an exhortation, a promise, a prediction, or a revelation. However, it is principally those portions of the prophetic Scripture which predict or forecast the future which call for special hermeneutics. The other types of prophecies are so easily and readily understood by the human mind as to need no extended explanation.¹³³

There are two views which are to be avoided concerning prophecy. The first is the belief that prophecy is nothing but a history of the events before they come to pass, and the second is that predictive prophecy has a psychological basis, that is, it is merely the product of intuition and imagination. The truth lies in the fact that prophecies are but proclamations of that which God has revealed.

Prophecy was spoken within the framework of the present and the past, or in other words in the old dispensation. It must be understood that the utterances the prophets put forth by their messages were in terms of their

¹³²Terry, op. cit., p. 242.

¹³³Ibid., pp. 313-315.

day. it must be realized that from dispensation to dispensation prophecy undergoes transmutation. Thus the light of the later revelation, that of the New Testament principles, must guide in the understanding of this "transmutation."¹³⁴

It was with the above in mind that Kevan quoted Samuel Davidson from his book entitled, Old Testament Prophecy.

. . . The true way to regard prophecy is to accept it literally as the meaning of the prophet—the only meaning which in his time he could have—but to say, as to fulfillment, that the form of the kingdom of God is not altered, and altered finally, never to return to its old form; and so fulfillment will not take place in the form of the prediction, but in an altered form, but still the truth of the prophecy will, no doubt, be realized. . . .¹³⁵

The fulfillment of the prophecy is to be real, for what has been prophesied will come to pass. However, the fulfillment may not be a "literalistic" fulfillment. That is, it may not be a letter-by-letter mechanical correspondence between the prophecy and fulfillment. Prophecies may not be fulfilled in the exact manner in which they were uttered. It is important to discover the historical and circumstantial factors under which the prophecy was uttered, and only then can proper inference be made concerning the interpretation of prophecy for the present dispensation. Thus the prophecy uttered in the old dispensation may be the acorn, but its fulfillment may be realized in the new dispensation as the oak. It is the reality of the prophecy which is to be fulfilled, the main idea with which it is involved. That which is of permanent value in the prophecy will be fulfilled, but that which

¹³⁴Henry, Revelation and the Bible, op. cit., pp. 296-297.

¹³⁵Ibid., p. 297.

belongs to a stipulated period will pass away unfulfilled.¹³⁶ The dispensational forms must be stripped off.

Various authors have stated different characteristics which should be kept in mind in interpreting prophecy. Terry, for instance, stated three, the first being that the prophecy in the Old Testament should be studied within the entire context of the Old Testament. Secondly, prophecy is filled with language of the prophet's time, of allusions to contemporary events, etc. Thus a historical knowledge of the background of prophecy is necessary for interpretation. Thirdly, each prophet had individual characteristics, and, even though their utterances were God-inspired, and they could say, "thus saith the Lord," still the expression of this message was colored by their individuality.¹³⁷

Berkhof has also listed several considerations which the interpreter should know for the work of exposition. For instance he stated that as a whole prophecy has an organic character. At times particular facts were not prophesied, but general ideas were stated which became more definite with the progressiveness of God's revelation. Secondly, Berkhof emphasized that prophecy has a historical connection, and was first of all a message to their contemporaries, but yet they also transcended the limits of history in prophesying. The third statement of Berkhof's was that there is a "prophetic perspective," in which great future events were compressed into a brief space of time, and seen at a glance. Fourthly, prophetic language cannot be regarded as symbolical throughout, and only when warranted by Scripture

¹³⁶Ibid., pp. 297-298.

¹³⁷Terry, op. cit., p. 326.

must language be interpreted in any other than a literal sense. The fifth characteristic is that the prophets spoke in the thought forms provided by the dispensation in which they lived. Thus a literal fulfillment cannot be expected in all cases because the thought forms of life undergo radical changes, and only the main essential idea of the prophecy can be expected to be fulfilled. Sixthly, occasionally the prophets transcended their historical and dispensational limitations, and were able to speak in forms of a more spiritual dispensation, such as in prophecies of the Church of the New Testament era. The last characteristic is that at times prophetic actions revealed the word of the Lord.¹³⁸

Kevan has stated three points of interest in this matter. First, if the prophets' words apply only to the Old Testament dispensation, then the fulfillment will be literally in terms of that dispensation. Secondly, if to be fulfilled in the New Testament, then the forms of the old dispensation must be separated from the New, and the fulfillment will conform to the spirit of the New Testament dispensation. Thirdly, if a prophecy is capable of fulfillment in both dispensations, then in each dispensation the fulfillment will be according to the form of that dispensation.¹³⁹

Different authors also have listed various rules for the interpretation of prophecy. However, because of Berkhof's completeness and general coverage of what the other authors have said, only his rules will be related.

a. The words of the prophets should be taken in their usual literal sense, unless the context or the manner in which they are fulfilled clearly indicate that they have a symbolical meaning. . . .

¹³⁸Berkhof, op. cit., pp. 149-152.

¹³⁹Henry, Revelation and the Bible, op. cit., p. 297.

b. In studying the figurative descriptions that are found in the prophets, the interpreter should make it his aim to discover the fundamental idea expressed. . . .

c. In the interpretation of the symbolical actions of the prophets, the interpreter must proceed on the assumption of their reality, i.e., of their occurrence in actual life, unless the connection clearly proves the contrary. . . .

d. The fulfillment of some of the most important prophecies is germinal, i.e., they are fulfilled by installments, each fulfillment being a pledge of that which is to follow. Hence while it is a mistake to speak of a double or treble sense of prophecy, it is perfectly correct to speak of a two or threefold fulfillment. It is quite evident, e.g., that Joel's prophecy in 2:28-32 was not completely fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. . . .

e. Prophecies should be read in the light of their fulfillment, for this will often reveal depths that would otherwise have escaped the attention. . . . The interpreter should bear in mind, however, that many of them do not refer to specific historical events, but enunciate some general principle that may be realized in a variety of ways. . . .¹⁴⁰

Legal Literature. A search through a number of books, written upon both the literature and hermeneutics of the Bible, revealed that there is extremely little written upon the legal portion of the Bible from either a literary standpoint or a hermeneutical approach. However, there is legal literature within the Scripture.

In the Old Testament, law is threefold. First, there is the moral law, which can be found in the Decalogue. Secondly there is the ceremonial law, which describes the ritual and all the typical enactments. Political law is the third division, which law relates to the Israelites in their national and political life.

It is evident that Christ dealt effectively with the law in His

¹⁴⁰Berkhof, op. cit., pp. 152-153.

ministry. His purpose was not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17), and therefore He regarded the law as authoritative. However, what Christ did was to show the true meaning of the law, to show the spirit rather than the letter of the law. He gave it a spiritual application. Whereas previously righteousness was considered possible only by a punctilious observance of the external requirements of the law, Christ taught that the importance was not exterior, but interior.

Essentially what was involved in Jesus' handling of the law was not so much a contrast between the teaching of Jesus and that of the law. What was mainly involved was the difference between His interpretation of the law and that of the Scribes and Pharisees. It was the traditional interpretation and not the law itself which Jesus condemned or corrected. Christ interpreted the law by approaching it from a spiritual angle, rather than the customary legalistic means of exposition.

Concerning the legal matter of the Old Testament, Pierre Ch. Marcel gave a very important principle which should be used to guide the interpreter of this present dispensation as he handles the subject of legal matter in the old dispensation. This rule is as follows:

. . . The whole economy of the Old Testament is centered in Christ. The gospel therefore is found also throughout the Old Testament where nothing can be understood without Christ. In the Law one can, one must, discover Christ, his covenant, his mediation, his kingship, the universality of his reign. . . .¹⁴¹

All the literature of the Bible has by no means been covered. What has been discussed has revealed the fact that different forms of literature may require different methods of hermeneutics. Each type has its own liter-

¹⁴¹ Henry, Revelation and the Bible, op. cit., p. 133.

ary style, and a knowledge of the characteristics of the various literature is very valuable in the work of exposition of the Bible.

The Interpreter

In order to be a capable . . . and correct interpreter of the Holy Scriptures, one needs a variety of qualifications, both natural and acquired. For though a large proportion of the sacred volume is sufficiently simple for the child to understand, and the common people and the unlearned may find on every page much that is profitable for instruction in righteousness, there is much that required, for its proper apprehension and exposition, the noblest powers of intellect and the most ample learning. . . .¹⁴²

Spiritual qualifications. It has been the purpose of this section to state briefly what the main qualifications of an able expositor of God's Word are expected to be. From the conservative point of view the spiritual qualifications of the expositor are very important.

The first spiritual qualification, according to Ramm, is that the expositor himself must be born again.¹⁴³ The new birth brings man's thinking and logic under the influence of the Holy Spirit. This, in turn, enables man to readily receive the things of the Spirit of God. From the angle of conservatism this is only natural, for "as the Holy Spirit is the divine mediator of the Scriptures, so also he is their divine interpreter."¹⁴⁴ It is the Spirit who is to guide unto all truth (John 16:13-14), and this He does by illuminating men's minds and hearts to the truth within the Word of God. As previously stated in this paper, this does not, of course, mean that even with the Spirit's guidance all interpretation will be completely

¹⁴²Davidson, op. cit., p. 23. ¹⁴³Ramm, op. cit., p. 8.

¹⁴⁴Henry, Revelation and the Bible, op. cit., p. 268.

without fault and error, and thus infallible. Man's fallen and degenerate reason must be taken into account, as well as those influences which have through the years conditioned him to think as he does. But taking all of this into full account, the Holy Spirit is able to lead men to arrive at a knowledge of all the essential truth contained within the Bible by illuminating their minds. The Spirit's work of illumination is perfect, though not of the same definiteness as was given to the writers of the Bible.¹⁴⁵ However, man's work of reception and reasoning is imperfect and therefore at times this imperfection is evidenced in faulty exegesis. This can be seen by the contradictory exegetical work of God-led and Spirit-illuminated Calvinists and Arminians. This, however, does not set aside the truth that without the illumination of the Spirit man could not understand the main essential truths of Scripture (II Corinthians 2:14).

Davidson stated another spiritual qualification, which he claimed was the possessing a singleness of desire to know the revealed will and mind of God, and then to follow it. Such a desire can take place only in one who has been regenerated. It is the Holy Spirit Who influences the production of such a desire. Such a state of mind, Davidson claimed, is of supreme importance and one which must be brought to the exposition of the Scriptures. It also consists of a realization that the Scriptures are the infallible Word of God, produced by the Holy Spirit.¹⁴⁶

Davidson, according to the statement just quoted, believed that the Holy Spirit brought about a realization that the Scriptures were the infalli-

¹⁴⁵Ramm, loc. cit.

¹⁴⁶Davidson, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

ble Word of God. This also seems to be the view of Ernest F. Kevan.¹⁴⁷ This writer is also of the opinion that the Holy Spirit witnesses to believers that Scripture is His infallible revelation. Conservatism in general would no doubt be of the same persuasion. If this be the proper view, then it would only be expected that the Holy Spirit would illumine the Word of God to those who accept His witness to its own character and nature.

When one is of the above persuasion it is not at all difficult to agree with the implications, if not direct statements, of J. Theodore Mueller that liberalism and neo-orthodoxy cannot claim the Spirit's illumination on the Scriptures. Indirectly, this can be seen in the statement he has made about liberalism, and more directly in the statement about neo-orthodoxy, both of which follow.

If, in opposition to Christ and his inspired apostles, liberal theologians reject large parts of the Old and New Testaments as mythical, this unwarranted action is prompted by sheer unbelief and downright rebellion against God. . . . Where this is done willfully and persistently, there God in his righteous wrath and just judgment may ultimately withdraw his Holy Spirit so that the Spirit's saving witness is no longer perceived in their darkened hearts (Matt. 13:13-15; John 12:39-41). . . .¹⁴⁸

Concerning neo-orthodoxy, which Mueller claimed was denying the gospel truths held by the Christian Church, he said:

. . . For this sort of theologizing neo-orthodoxy certainly cannot claim the Spirit's guidance into all truth; it is a movement away from the Scriptures, and no appeal to the guidance of the Holy Spirit will avail in its behalf.¹⁴⁹

It is the opinion of this writer, that only when an interpreter is convinced within his own heart that the Bible is God's infallibly revealed

¹⁴⁷Henry, Revelation and the Bible, op. cit., p. 293.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 273-274. ¹⁴⁹Ibid., p. 280.

Word can he possess a singleness of desire to know the revealed will and mind of God which Davidson said was an important spiritual qualification of an exegete.

Intellectual qualifications. There are certain characteristics which a sound expositor of Scripture must possess. These are the natural, innate qualities which one either does or doesn't possess.

To properly exegete the Bible one must have a natural ability of perception which will enable him to have critical sharpness to discern at once the connection of thought and the movement and association of ideas. He must be able to realize both what a passage of Scripture does not teach as well as what it does. He must have the ability to put himself in the conditions and environment surrounding the author which he is studying. He must have sound, sober judgment and be able to analyze, examine, compare, and contrast. This is the ability to distinguish the true from the false, the erroneous assumptions of man from the truth of God's Word.

Essentially this qualification of mind would demand that whatever ideas an interpreter attaches to Scripture are the very ideas which the writers themselves originally intended to convey.

Educational qualifications. By saying that there are certain educational requirements needed for proper interpretation of Scripture is not equivalent to saying that the Scriptures are to be restricted only to those of good education. The value of a good education cannot be questioned. However, the individual with average education and average intelligence, and with adequate guidance and books, is capable of discovering the main and

central meaning of the majority of passages in Scripture.¹⁵⁰

However, he who would interpret the Bible to others, and who desires to obtain the most correct interpretation possible, needs to know or have available information concerning various matters and subjects. He needs to have a good secular education. He needs to know history, both sacred and civil. A knowledge of philosophy aids him in understanding how various systems of interpretation have come into being, and enables him to know the erroneous foundations upon which they may have built. He is helped by a knowledge of literature, and its various modes of expression, as the Bible is composed of different types of literature. Theology, be it historic, systematic, Biblical, Old Testament or New Testament, is an essential part of the interpreter's educational requirements. Linguistical training is necessary, as it is essential that he have an understanding of the original language of Scripture. Davidson, however, may have gone too far when he said ". . . without a knowledge of the original, the Scriptures cannot be understood. . . ." ¹⁵¹ Geography of the Bible should be known; the science of chronology should be understood; the customs and politics of Israel and surrounding nations are of great value in interpretation. There are many other areas of thought and fact which should be known by an educated interpreter. However, it is not necessary to delve further, as it is evident that a well rounded knowledge of various subjects is of tremendous value in obtaining a proper interpretation of many passages of the Bible.

There is an important aspect which must be pointed out concerning

¹⁵⁰Ramm, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁵¹Davidson, op. cit., p. 26.

the education which an interpreter has. This aspect is that, as much as is humanly possible, he must not allow his learning, both secular and theological, to weigh him down with pre-conceived ideas which would give a forced interpretation to Scripture. In other words, he must not allow his background training to force him to read into passages that which is not there. He must have such a spirit that will subordinate all pre-conceived theories and theologies to whatever he perceives to be the true teaching of Scripture.

An examination of Calvinism will reveal how its leader, John Calvin, built his theological walls upon Augustine's philosophical foundation. Thus this great leader brought with him certain pre-conceived philosophical beliefs which he was unable to avoid in reading into passages of Scripture. Concerning Calvin, Farrar has said that as honest as he meant to be, he read into Scripture what he wished to find there.¹⁵²

In his Preface to the Romans Calvin laid down the golden rule, that 'It is the first business of an interpreter to let his author say what he does say, instead of attributing to him what we think he ought to say.' Multitudes of previous writers—even Hilary—had said something of the same kind, yet scarcely one among them all had been able to withstand the sway of dogmatic prepossessions. Nor was Calvin any exception.
. . .

. . . the determination not to be disturbed in the convictions which he thus had gained has undoubtedly led him at times to be untrue to his own exegetical principles, by dragging his special dogma into passages where it is not found, and by putting an unfair gloss on others which tell in the opposite direction. . . .¹⁵³

Education should enable the interpreter to better determine exactly what the Scriptures do, and do not, teach.

¹⁵²Frederic W. Farrar, History of Interpretation (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1886), p. 351.

¹⁵³Ibid., p. 348.

CHAPTER V

LIBERAL HERMENEUTICS

It has become the conviction of this writer, as previously stated, that the concept which one holds concerning the nature and character of the Bible will largely determine the hermeneutical principles which are applied to the Scriptures. This, it has been shown, is true of the conservative exegete. It is also true of the liberal expositor, as has been shown in this chapter.

I. LIBERAL CONCEPT OF SCRIPTURE

Liberalism does not conceive of Scripture as being a divinely inspired and infallible revelation from God. Most liberals, however, do concede that it is the greatest piece of literature on religious and moral insights which has ever been written. The main difference between the Bible and other religious books is a matter only of degree; it contains the highest religious and ethical insights gleaned from universal divine revelation.¹

Since the Bible is not believed to be an infallible revelation, it has therefore no final authority for Christian truth and morals.² Though it may be the highest of all religious literature it is still not considered to be any more accurate or objectively authoritative than other literature of

¹Carl F.H. Henry, "Revelation and the Bible," Christianity Today, II (June 9, 1958), p. 6.

²Wick Broomall, Biblical Criticism (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957), p. 70.

its type. Many errors and mistakes are to be found in its contents as is true of all such religious writings of its kind. Much of the Bible is inconsistent and historically inaccurate.³ The sayings in the gospels are not complete, nor are they accurate.⁴ The Bible is not a unified book because it has come from too many ages⁵ and therefore it is impossible to make it harmonize with itself.⁶ Whatever is supernatural in Scripture is rejected. From what has been said it is quite evident that liberalism, in no way, binds itself to an authoritative and divinely revealed Bible.

Influences on the Liberal Concept of Scripture

There have been various reasons which are accountable for the above liberalistic concept of Scripture. This concept was not developed overnight, but it gradually and cautiously grew out of Protestant orthodoxy. Two factors which definitely aided in shaping liberalism's present concept of Scripture were philosophy and science. A study of these two influences will present a more complete view of the liberal concept of Scripture as well as account for this concept.

Philosophy. There is not one dominant controlling principle of philosophy which can account for liberalism. Actually it is a group of

³Georgia Harkness, Toward Understanding the Bible (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. 56.

⁴Henry J. Cadbury, The Peril of Modernizing Jesus (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), p. 156.

⁵Harry Emerson Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible (London: Student Christian Movement, 1924), p. 90.

⁶Ibid., pp. 24-25.

philosophies. ". . . No great philosopher such as Spinoza, Hume, or Kant . . . laid its foundation through a consciously radical departure from the traditional Christian creed . . ."⁷

Liberalism's foundation is that of contemporary religious experience.⁸ The thinker or philosopher most responsible for developing this, Edwin Burt affirmed, was Friedrich Schleiermacher.⁹ Human experience became to Schleiermacher the criteria by which the validity of any theological concept was to be tested.

. . . Schleiermacher's great contribution was his insistence that there is something in the present experience of men and women which gives meaning to the concepts of religion, and that by systematic appeal to that experience we can distinguish the valid meanings and doctrinal interpretations from the erroneous ones.¹⁰

Schleiermacher believed that the task of theology was an interpretation of man's religious experiences. In his thinking Scripture took second place to experience, for ". . . it [experience] must entirely subordinate . . . the traditional method of deducing its doctrines from the authority of some revelation of God contained in ancient Scripture . . ."¹¹

Since experience changes, Schleiermacher could then only logically say that:

. . . the conclusions reached by theological analysis and explanation are tentative. They are subject to progressive correction by future experience, and should be explicitly recognized as valid only with a limited historical epoch. When religious experience changes, as it is bound to do, theology will also need to change in order to be true to it. Schleier-

⁷Edwin A. Burt, Types of Religious Philosophy (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), p. 281.

⁸Ibid., p. 295.

⁹Ibid., p. 284.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 295.

¹¹Ibid., p. 292.

macher frankly declares that in these ways religious doctrines are hypothetical and likely to be modified in the light of future experience.¹²

Thus Schleiermacher taught that absolute truth could not be claimed for any conclusion reached. All conclusions are liable for correction, and perhaps when tested by future experience even radical falsification.¹³

Throughout this system of thought, Burti pointed out, the major themes of traditional theology are preserved and used.¹⁴ However, because experiences of men are the final court of appeal, and our experiences interpret the doctrines of the Christian faith, it becomes evident that these themes are radically different in meaning than they were in orthodox theology. For instance, in the doctrine of God it can be seen how the attributes are given an interpretation from the standpoint of human experience. Burti stated:

. . . the meaning of these attributes is determined throughout by their reference to human experience. They do not describe what God is in himself, but simply and solely what he experientially proves himself to be in relation to us. By the attribute of omnipotence, for example, we do not mean to ascribe to God absolute power in any metaphysical sense, but such power as is required to explain our consciousness of dependence. By that of eternity we do not mean to assert that God actually transcends time, but that our religious awareness posits no temporal limit to his activity in relation to us. . . . Indeed, the essential thing in the doctrine of Christ's resurrection is not his historical emergence from the tomb; what the doctrine primarily attests is the Christian experience of Christ¹⁵ as an enduring and present power for redemption in the lives of men. . . .

Such ideas as advocated by Schleiermacher had a tremendous effect upon the Christian faith. Through it a revolution in theology took place. Burti said that if liberalism does have any basic philosophical principle, it would be Schleiermacher's development of the empirical system of thought into a

¹²Ibid., p. 290.

¹³Ibid., p. 294.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 293.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 294.

positive and constructive method for the interpretation of religion.¹⁶ Liberalism has built upon this empirical method and has, as its cornerstone, contemporary religious experience. This has drastically effected and moulded its principles of hermeneutics. The task of liberalism was to redefine the major ideas of theology in the light of contemporary religious experience, and in doing so discarding whatever traditional ideas seemed inconsistent with the new definitions, and transform other ideas into conformity with the new.¹⁷

The ideas advocated by Schleiermacher have had a tremendous influence upon the liberal attitude towards Scripture and its hermeneutical principles. There is another important area which has also effected the liberal concept of the Bible. This area is that of science, which, by its empirical method, locks arm in arm with the experiential ideas of Schleiermacher.

Science. Modern science, said Edwin Lewis, is the main key to the interpretation of liberal thought.¹⁸ The influence which science has had upon liberalism has accounted for much of its concept of the Bible and its interpretation. Liberalism accepted the "assured" results of science because it claimed that that which would be empirically verified was the final proof of truth. Theology which was contrary to the findings and methods of science was thus in opposition to that which was empirically verified truth. There are two areas of science in particular which have had a strong effect on the liberal concept of Scripture. These two areas are evolution and higher criticism, which are treated in the following paragraphs.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 295.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 282.

Evolution. The scientific theory of evolution has had tremendous impact upon the shaping of liberal thinking. Beyond question it has deeply colored liberalism's concept of the Bible and its interpretation. Liberalism has accepted the main tenets of Darwinianism, and applied its basic principles to the interpretation of Scripture. Consequently as infallible, divinely-revealed Bible is an impossibility to all who view the Bible in the light of evolution.

The Darwinian theory of evolution has brought about a concept of Scripture which is contrary and opposed to the orthodox concept. Before Darwinianism gained wide acceptance the general, almost universal, opinion was that the account of man's creation in Genesis was a historic, scientific fact. However, the theory of evolution brought forth a different concept which was accepted by many, and gave man a natural origin rather than the Biblical, supernatural origin. Some sought to rework the creation record in Genesis to harmonize with theistic evolution. For most individuals, whether leaning towards the liberal persuasion or the conservative persuasion, there was no reconciling evolution with the traditional orthodox faith. The issue was soon drawn as to whether one would accept evolution and thus reject the Bible as being an infallibly revealed revelation from God, or else reject evolution and hold to the Bible as being an authoritative, infallible revelation. One or the other demanded an acceptance. The reason was that Darwin's principles, applied to the Scriptures, meant an abandonment of the view that the Bible, in all of its parts, was an infallible revelation of divine truth. The implications such a theory would have, when applied to the exposition of Scripture, are quite obvious. The fruit of this theory as concerns Biblical exegesis can be seen in the JEDP theory.

Higher Criticism. The theory of evolution demanded that theology be made to conform to its teaching. This demand could be made as the science of evolution professed that its teachings were empirically verified. Therefore traditional orthodox theology which opposed its "truths" was branded as erroneous. The theology which conformed itself to the evolutionary principles came to be known as "liberalism."

The JEDP theory was a result of moulding theology into the pattern advocated by the theory of evolution. By dividing up the Pentateuch into its various parts which liberalism claimed to have been written at different times, this theory "proved" that Moses did not write these books.¹⁹ It also delivered a hard blow to the orthodox theory of revelation, for if the Pentateuch was not written by Moses as it is stated to have been, then it could not be infallible and therefore not a divinely-revealed record. What was true of the Pentateuch in liberal thinking also became true of the entire Bible.

The evolutionary theory was also applied to the history of Israel and its religious institutions. It expressed itself in this area under the guise of a "developmental theory of Israel's religion." Through an arrangement of the books of the Bible in their approximately chronological order the Bible itself becomes viewed as a product of natural evolution. Through such a grouping of the books one can study, step by step as it were, the gradual unfolding of man's religious insights. As man grew in moral and religious insight he gained a progressive understanding of the religious themes which he presented in the Bible. For instance, the doctrine of God, liberals

¹⁹Harkness, op. cit., p. 64.

believed, gave strong evidence of "progressive development."

. . . The religious beginnings of Israel were essentially similar to those of other nations . . . As Israel progressed, her conception of God developed. Having passed through such stages as animatism, animism, polydemonism, totemism, henotheism, and then others, Israel finally obtained a monotheistic conception of God. . . .²⁰

During man's immature spiritual insights he held crude concepts about God.

However, as he progressed in moral and spiritual insights his ideas about God grew into high, ethical views.

It is along the above same manner that liberalism contends that all the various Biblical ideas and themes developed. The various Scriptural concepts came through a long, hard period of development. ". . . every idea in the Bible started from primitive and childlike origins and . . . grew in scope and height toward the culmination in Christ's Gospel. . . ."²¹ However, these concepts, though greatly developed, have not yet reached their "apex" in development. Biblical concepts are therefore not absolutely final and authoritative at any moment in their statements and ideas. Biblical concepts are still evolving, and may change as human religious experience changes, or as science uncovers new truth.

. . . no traditional Christian doctrine, however clearly taught in the Bible, is absolutely vital to contemporary religion; it is an intellectual interpretation of past religious experience, using the scientific²² assumptions and categories then available, but it is not final for us.

Before discussing the main result of such thinking, which result was the destruction of the authority of Scripture, the liberal view of revelation

²⁰Carl F.H. Henry, Contemporary Evangelical Thought (Great Neck, New York, 1957), p. 15.

²¹Podick, The Modern Use of the Bible, op. cit., p. 11.

²²Burt, op. cit., p. 305.

and inspiration is considered in the following paragraphs.

Liberal view of revelation. The conservative view of revelation and the liberal view are quite different. The former claims that revelation is that communication from God which has been recorded as Scripture. It further claims that this communication was of such a nature that it could not have been attained by man's natural reason alone. It required the mediatorship of the Holy Spirit who revealed this communication from God to man. This, however, is not the liberal view of revelation. By revelation the liberal means that process of ". . . man's halting and gradual discovery of divine truth rather than a supposed absolute disclosure from God's omniscience. . . ." ²³ Thus revelation was nothing that was immediately imparted from God to man. It was a "developmental process" in which "divine" truths were gradually, over a period of time, seen by man. Revelation seems to be mainly man's heightened religious insights into those things which are always about him. ". . . The word of the Lord came through the common things of the common days. . . ." ²⁴ It cannot be denied that God did speak at times through the common or ordinary things of the day. For instance, in the eighteenth chapter of Jeremiah God spoke to this prophet through the potter molding his clay. However, liberalism limited revelation entirely to the sphere of the natural and ordinary. To the liberal the doctrine of divine revelation does not concern spectacular events. Rather as the human consciousness gradually evolved away from the bestial nature and towards the divine, revelation was gradually received—it is the divine in man which is overcoming the bestial

²³Burt, op. cit., p. 316.

²⁴William A. Irwin, The Old Testament: Keystone of Human Culture (New York: Henry Schuman, Inc., 1952), p. 94.

and thus making it possible for man more fully to apprehend God.²⁵ To the liberal, then, revelation is a discovery, rather than an impartation, of divine truth.

Revelation is not to be identified with the Bible, for much of its contents are full of errors, and therefore much of it cannot be the Word of God. Georgia Harkness expressed this truth when she said ". . . the fact that a statement is found in the Bible does not make it true. . . ."²⁶

When the Bible was written, the men who wrote it had no idea that they were writing divine literature, claimed liberalism.²⁷ Liberal thinkers give more credit to the conditions, beliefs, and circumstances of the day as influencing what the writers wrote than they do to the influence of the Holy Spirit.²⁸ The subjectiveness of the author also strongly colored much of what he wrote.²⁹ Burt has stated that liberalism maintains that the influences upon the writer's of Scripture were little different from those influences which move any contemporary thinker to interpret life for the benefit of any who might discover guidance from his writings.³⁰

Revelation is not completed as far as liberalism is concerned. The concepts in Scripture are still open for further expansion, for they were not finished when the Scriptures were canonized.³¹ Revelation is still taking

²⁵Ibid., p. 121. ²⁶Harkness, op. cit., p. 25.

²⁷Ernest Cadman Colwell, The Study of the Bible (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), pp. 3-4.

²⁸Cadbury, op. cit., p. 23. ²⁹Ibid., p. 75.

³⁰Burt, op. cit., p. 317.

³¹Harry Emerson Fosdick, A Guide to Understanding the Bible (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938), p. xiv.

place and developing.

Liberal view of inspiration. In the light of modern facts, liberalism has claimed that it is impossible to maintain a theory of inspiration which claims to have produced infallible, inerrant manuscripts. Thus it repudiated the orthodox view of inspiration, which view is that by means of the Holy Spirit men were enabled to receive the revelation of God and to transmit it to others without error or defect. This transmission, orthodoxy has maintained, was performed by these men in their writing of the Scriptures. Thus orthodoxy believes that the Scriptures are authoritative and without error because of the divine inspiration of those men who wrote them.

Liberalism has not denied the "inspiration" of the Bible. However, it has not meant by inspiration what the conservative orthodox thinkers have meant. Harry Emerson Fosdick claimed that inspiration has not changed, but men's ideas of the method of inspiration have. Therefore Fosdick maintains that the old orthodox conception is no longer credible.³² Concerning the liberal concept of inspiration Georgia Harkness has said:

Are we to say, then, that the Bible is not inspired? By no means. Rather, we shall have to get a different idea of what is meant by inspiration. The word inspiration means "inbreathing." The Bible is inspired in the sense that the inbreathing of the divine appears on every page. It is the record of the spiritual experience of a people who over the twelve centuries spanned by its writing were guided, supported, chastened, forgiven, delivered, redeemed by God. Its great theme is salvation, and centering about this theme it has a marvelous unity in spite of its discrepancies in detail. The human deficiencies, as well as the great insights, of the men who wrote it are there, but what is more important, we see God there and hear him speak through the writers' words. In the Bible we have 'heavenly treasure' even though it is in 'earthen vessels.' What we need to do in order to grasp its meaning is to give full recognition to both elements, and the divine message will shine through with

³²Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

greater richness and power if we understand something of the channels of human fallibility mixed with high insights through which the message comes.³³

The liberal view of inspiration does not permit the idea that God spoke directly to men through the Holy Spirit in such a manner as to allow the author to reproduce the revelation in an infallible record. Thus the Bible is not an infallible book in liberal thought. It rejects the doctrine of plenary inspiration, which the orthodox position embraces.

Liberalism maintained that the Bible is not all on one level of inspiration.³⁴ Different parts of the Biblical content differ in the "degree" of their "inspiration." Here again the evolutionary process is seen at work. The early parts of Scripture or those portions first written are less reliable than the portions written later in history. Thus the New Testament would have a higher degree of inspiration than the Old Testament.

Higher "destructive" criticism has been largely responsible for the liberal view of inspiration. This research on the Bible, Fosdick declared, has reconstructed the Bible, putting it on a new basis, not on the old untenable basis of infallible inspiration, but rather upon " . . . the factually demonstrable basis of a coherent development. The Scriptures reflect some twelve centuries and more of deepening and enlarging spiritual experience and insight . . ."³⁵ Thus inspiration also is a matter of development. It is a development of continued, progressive "experience and insight," and therefore not that means whereby an individual is enabled by the Holy Spirit

³³Harkness, op. cit., p. 29. ³⁴Ibid., p. 74.

³⁵Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, op. cit., p. ix.

to receive instantaneously the message which God has for man.

. . . 'Inspiration,' according to the liberal, is determined largely by the principle of evolution. How much is 'revealed' to Israel at any time is determined by the stage to which Israel has arrived in her gradual evolution. Certain truths, therefore, which the Bible seemingly puts at an early date are relegated to a much later time so as to put Israel's antiquity. And, to make Israel's religion even more natural, it is dogmatically asserted that many of her best ideas were taken over from Egypt or Babylon or Greece or some other nation.³⁶

To the liberal, then, the Bible is inspired, though not in the traditional orthodox sense of inspiration. Rather than being evidenced by a book which is infallible and authoritative in its teaching and doctrine, inspiration in liberal thought is seen in the Bible by its being able, through the ages, to inspire millions to a better way of living and a higher discernment of the Eternal.³⁷ The Scriptures are pre-eminent among all the books ever written, and though fallible, liberalism claims God still speaks through them to men.

Result of Liberal Concept of the Bible

The main result of the above conceptions of the Bible can be well phrased in one sentence: the Bible has become to the liberal a fallible, errant book whose divine authority has been destroyed. It is not the divinely inspired, infallibly revealed Word of God. Therefore the contents of the Bible can be treated as reason dictates, for reason is in no way bound by the conviction that it is handling an authoritative, supernatural revelation from God; the writers were merely fallible human beings.

Having maintained that the Bible was written by fallible human beings,

³⁶Broomall, op. cit., p. 69.

³⁷Harkness, op. cit., p. 66.

liberalism therefore logically stated that the Bible too was fallible. Those of this persuasion have professed to have discovered many errors in the Scriptures. For instance, in various places the Bible may be inaccurate due to events recorded there not having been written down until many years after they actually happened. "Inconsistencies" have also been noted by the liberal when comparing several recorded accounts of the same event. Some events and teachings of the Bible may be erroneous due to the fact of their being interpolations. The contents of the Bible was colored by folklore, riddles, oracles, and fables. Much of the narratives in the Old Testament is considered possibly being a rewriting of popular tradition and tales.³⁸ Because of its ancient human authorship liberals are persuaded that it is unscientific and full of scientific errors. The writers of Scripture were children of their day, which was an unscientific age. For liberalism, science became an authority which took the place of the supernatural in the Bible. In our age the Bible must be viewed through the present-day scientific claims. The supernaturalism of traditional Christianity has been subordinated to science in liberalism.³⁹ Such ideas as the above are the result of liberalism's destruction of the authority of Scripture.

Liberal Concept of Bible and Hermeneutics

Liberalism does not approach the Bible in a search for timeless truths. Its object is to interpret Scripture as reason would dictate to be in accord

³⁸Robert Pfeiffer, Introduction to the Old Testament (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1941), p. 28.

³⁹Burt, op. cit., p. 328.

with those facts which have been verified by science.

Liberalism has claimed that its standards of interpretation are those which are to be applied to any piece of literature, since there are no methods of studying the Bible which are not also at the same time methods of studying other religious literature.⁴⁰ Thus liberalism gives no consideration to the Bible as being a unique book, a divine revelation from God, when it interprets its contents. The same expository principles would be applied to the Scriptures as would be applied to any religious literature written today for ". . . in principle, the Bible is not different from religious literature written at the present time . . ."⁴¹

Harry Emerson Fosdick has given helpful insight into the liberal application of hermeneutics to the Scripture. He contended that as the Scriptures are at the moment they are an expression of the "mental categories" which were in use when the writers penned their documents.⁴² These "categories" when used in their period adequately expressed the Christian faith. However, being true to the influence of progressive development, Fosdick maintained that these "categories" of Biblical times are no longer applicable for today's thinking. Modern "categories" are absolutely essential for understanding the Bible today, inasmuch as "categories" used 2000 years ago cannot apply to "categories" in the twentieth century.⁴³ Here is evidenced the evolutionary idea as it is believed that "mental categories" are constantly chang-

⁴⁰Colwell, op. cit., p. 123. ⁴¹Burt, op. cit., p. 316.

⁴²Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, op. cit., p. 102.

⁴³Ibid., p. 129.

ing. They are but transient phrasings of something which in itself is permanent.

. . . To bind our minds to the perpetual use of ancient matrices of thought just because they were employed in setting forth the eternal principles of the New Testament seems intellectual suicide. What is permanent in Christianity is not mental frameworks but abiding experiences that phrase and rephrase themselves in successive generations' ways of thinking and that grow in assured certainty and in richness of content.⁴⁴

This appeal from outgrown "mental categories" to the experience which they were trying to express is the keynote of liberalism. . . .⁴⁵ Kant's influence upon Fosdick can be seen at this particular instance of his thinking. Kant contended that at the heart of religion there were certain commanding values, which values were not set forth in facts which could be upset by scientific discovery.⁴⁶

Ever before the liberal interpreter then is the fact of change and development. That which once expressed a truth in one period of time does not always continue to express that truth. That which is expressed is and always will be truthful, but its expression must vary from age to age. This truth which is expressed one way in one age and another way in another age is what Fosdick calls the "abiding experience." The way in which one is to understand the Bible is to go through the transient "category" to the repeatable and "abiding experience."⁴⁷ The interpreter's job is to interpret the Scripture, not by its "mental categories" as does orthodoxy, but rather by finding the permanent truth, the "abiding experience" which is present in its

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 103. ⁴⁵Ibid., p. 189. ⁴⁶Burt, op. cit., p. 361.

⁴⁷Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, op. cit., p. 169.

"mental categories."

However, the "abiding experience" stated in "categories" of today will need to be redefined by tomorrow's experience and thinking. The "abiding experiences" which the liberal sought to find in the older orthodox formulas must themselves be set forth in formulas, which must in turn, one day, be replaced or dissolved by a new liberalism.⁴⁸

Due to the "mental categories" of another age in which the Bible is believed to be phrased, the liberal expositor can avoid giving any passage of Scripture a literal interpretation. Therefore it is possible, from this position, to reject or accept whatever teaching in the Bible is desired. Thus doctrines which are offensive to the natural reason, such as the doctrines of hell and retribution, can easily be wiped away by saying that the Bible is expressing itself in "mental categories" of antiquity. Today these doctrines must be restated in forms of this age, which may not express the truth in the Biblical "mental categories."

The evolutionary view of inspiration and revelation has further aided the liberal exegete in accepting or rejecting whatever he may please in the Bible. An idea expressed in one part of the Bible, such as some moral teaching in the Old Testament, may be rejected on the grounds that this idea was early and very incomplete if not erroneous. Since the Bible is only a culmination and development of man's highest ethical insights and religious thoughts, and since the writers were not under the controlling power of the Holy Spirit, the liberal interpreter is not under the restrictions which an

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 190.

authoritative, infallibly revealed Bible places upon the orthodox interpreter.

How does what has been said thus far apply to the actual interpretation of Scripture? A few illustrations have been given in the following paragraph.

The Genesis account of creation need not be interpreted as a literal truth; the liberal interpreter would probably state that this story is based on the Babylon story of creation.⁴⁹ Yet the childish myth and legend in the story of the creation does explain in mythical manner some puzzling features of human life and culture,⁵⁰ even though it itself was not a historical fact. The Hebrew "sheol" is also dependent upon a Babylon belief.⁵¹ Israel's ideas about Satan, the angels, and the resurrection are said to have been borrowed from the Zoroastrians during her sojourn in Babylonia.⁵² If these things be correct, then the Bible is not a divine revelation, and therefore the liberal interpreter is free to doubt the actual existence of such beings, and to interpret such ideas as an outmoded "category of thought" and consequently no longer applicable to present-day thinking. Liberalism is free to decide whether or not a whole book is historical and factual, or whether it is merely a tale and folklore. For instance, the book of Ruth is believed to have had little other reason for existence than to merely relate a fictitious story of long ago; Esther too is non-historical, if not mythological in its basic

⁴⁹W.O.E. Oesterley and Theodore H. Robinson, Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930), p. 320.

⁵⁰Pfeiffer, op. cit., p. 161.

⁵¹Oesterley and Robinson, op. cit., p. 321

⁵²Broomall, op. cit., p. 149.

concept; Jonah also is considered non-historical, but useful as allegorical material. As the fish swallowed Jonah, so Israel is to be swallowed by Babylon.⁵³ However, even in passages of historical doubt truth of great importance may be buried under layers of legend.⁵⁴

The fact has already been mentioned that the supernatural portions of Scripture are not accepted by liberalism as being actually supernatural. W.C.E. Oesterley and Theodore H. Robinson have related various miracles of the Old Testament as being explainable by the superstitious background of the writers.⁵⁵ Georgia Harkness stated that since the Biblical writers lived in an unscientific age they would naturally tend to relate events, whether naturally caused or otherwise, as having supernatural causes.⁵⁶

While not accepting the historicity of miracles, Fosdick believed that there was a vital spiritual experience or truth in them which the forefathers, by their "category" of miracle, were trying to express.

. . . The crucial question for modern Christianity to face is not first the credibility of this or that narrative nearly two thousand years old, but the possibility of retaining in our modern scientific thought such a vital and vivid expectancy of divine action as our fathers often phrased in terms of miracles.⁵⁷

The over-all impression which the liberal position seems to imply is that miracles themselves have a truth, an abiding value, in them. However, whether they are actually supernatural phenomena in every recorded instance

⁵³Ibid., p. 171. ⁵⁴Harkness, op. cit., p. 56.

⁵⁵Oesterley and Robinson, op. cit., pp. 88-91.

⁵⁶Harkness, loc. cit.

⁵⁷Fosdick, The Modern Use of the Bible, op. cit., p. 158.

seems to be generally denied. The liberal interpreter has no bounds to which he must restrict himself in making an exposition of these "truths."

Criticism of Liberal Hermeneutics

There are two main criticisms which the author of this paper believes to be the main weakness of liberal hermeneutics. The first criticism is that there are no definite hermeneutical laws in liberalism, and the second criticism is that liberal interpreters, rejecting an objective authority have substituted a subjective authority which offers no solid hermeneutical base. These two criticisms are stated in the following paragraphs.

Throughout this study there has not been discovered any definite hermeneutical laws or principles which the liberal theologian applies to Scripture. An unwritten law, not definitely stated as such, seems to be the evolutionary principle of progressive development. It is out of this principle that the liberal concept of Scripture has evolved, and this principle which regulates the approach of the liberal interpreter to the Bible. However, there does not seem to be a system of hermeneutical principles in liberalism as is found in conservatism.

Liberalism has no objective authority, as does conservatism, which places any restrictions on its hermeneutical approach to the Scriptures. ". . . The real authority, for liberalism, can only be 'the Christian consciousness' or 'Christian experience.' . . . The only authority . . . can be individual experience . . ."⁵⁸ Human reason and religious experience, seen in the light

⁵⁸J. Gresham Machen, Christianity and Liberalism (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 78.

of today's scientific assumptions and today's "categories," has become the authority which governs the liberal interpreter's hermeneutical approach to Scripture. J. Gresham Machen has revealed the weakness of substituting such a subjective authority in place of objective authority. He has written that:

. . . Such an authority is obviously no authority at all; for individual experience is endlessly diverse, and when once truth is regarded only as that which works at any particular time, it ceases to be truth. The result is abysmal skepticism.⁵⁹

The danger of such subjective authority in relation to the interpretation of Scripture is that ". . . the religious experience of men and women becomes the decisive fact and the final court of appeal by which we test the validity of any theological concept--the concept of God along with others. . . .⁶⁰

The subjective authority of reason and human experience in liberalism has caused its interpreters of Scripture to redefine the major theological ideas of traditional theology in the light of human experience. Whatever may be inconsistent with such an interpretation may be rejected. This of course eliminates deducting doctrines from the Bible as if it were an objective, authoritative revelation from God.

The subjective authority of liberalism has had a definite effect on the hermeneutical treatment of Scripture. As previously stated in this chapter, there is no traditional doctrine which is absolutely vital to contemporary religion, regardless of if it may be explicitly taught in the Bible. Such teaching of the Bible is an intellectual interpretation of past religious experiences of the writers of Scripture in the light of the

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Burt, op. cit., p. 288.

scientific assumptions and "categories" then available.⁶¹ Doctrines of the Bible, then are not binding on today's interpretation, for today's interpreter must reinterpret such ideas by today's religious experience in the light of today's scientific assumptions and categories.

. . . All that is necessary to theology is full acceptance of the facts of contemporary religious experience and the value that they signify for those in whose lives they appear. Everything else is secondary, and may properly be reinterpreted or even abandoned if it conflicts with other verifiable facts . . .⁶²

This subjectivism has allowed liberal interpreters a free hand to interpret Scripture as each individual expositor has desired. It has prevented any bounds being erected, such as found in conservatism, which would put specific rules and restrictions on biblical hermeneutics.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 305.

⁶²Ibid., p. 306.

CHAPTER VI

NEO-ORTHODOX CONCEPT OF HERMENEUTICS

The positions of the "neo-orthodox" thinkers have been in a formative stage and are only now beginning to crystallize.¹ Because of this fact it is difficult to give descriptions of neo-orthodox theological views which can be held as being representative of all crisis theologians.

There are several wings of neo-orthodoxy. The right-wing or conservative neo-orthodoxy is represented by Karl Barth, the founder of neo-orthodoxy. Liberal neo-orthodoxy is represented by Emil Brunner. Left-wing neo-orthodoxy is the extremely liberal neo-orthodoxy, and is represented by men such as Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich.²

One blanket statement cannot be made of neo-orthodoxy's theological views which can cover all three of its above divisions. This fact can be seen by a quick examination of the above three groups' views on revelation. For Barth nature contains no revelation. Brunner states differently, since for him there is revelation in nature, which is a supplement to special revelation, and through which God confronts all men. The left-wing thinkers of neo-orthodoxy, such as Paul Tillich, differ from both of the stated views, maintaining there is only a natural revelation since God speaks to man only through natural events.³

¹George A. Turner, "The Emancipating Word of God," The Asbury Seminary, XIII (Fall-Winter, 1959), p. 22.

²Joseph Free, "Archaeology and Neo-Orthodoxy," Bibliotheca Sacra A Theological Quarterly, 114 (April, 1957), p. 125.

³Kenneth S. Kantzer, "Contemporary Thinking About Revelation,"

However, because there are variances among the neo-orthodox thinkers, it cannot be said that there is no common ground of agreement for there are certain general features which tie this form of thought together. Those common features which involve neo-orthodoxy's hermeneutical principles have been the areas this section of the paper has considered.

I. NEO-ORTHODOX CONCEPT OF THE BIBLE

The neo-orthodox concept of the Bible is actually a synthesis between the orthodox view of Scripture as primarily a book of faith, and the liberal view of it as primarily a book of historical development. It is an attempt to establish a dialect between faith and history.⁴

Thus neo-orthodoxy attempts to cut across the paths of both orthodoxy and liberalism in its attempt at arriving at what it considers to be the true concept of the Bible. Neo-orthodoxy has reacted against what it considers to be orthodoxy's attempt to equate the authoritative object of faith with the Bible itself as a book, and deny it as being truly a historical record of a religious and cultural tradition. It strikes also liberalism, hitting the "higher critics" for insisting that if the Bible is a historical record it must be read as a historical record, and not as a record of an authoritative book of Christian faith.⁵ Neo-orthodoxy appears to be in the process of

Bibliotheca Sacra A Theological Quarterly, 115 (October, 1958), p. 310.

⁴J. Coert Rylaarsdam, "Preface to Hermeneutics," The Journal of Religion, XXX (April, 1950), p. 83.

⁵Ibid., pp. 82-83.

combining the two aspects, faith and history, in an attempt to organically relate them to interpret Scripture.⁶

In its procedure of synthesis, neo-orthodoxy accepts what is called "the assured results of Biblical criticism," although it does not fully agree with all the conclusions arrived at by the destructive higher critics. It does not reject the tools of critical scholarship, but does object to some of the ways in which they were used. Critical methodology is no barrier to a true understanding of the Bible, neo-orthodoxy would claim; the complaint neo-orthodoxy has raised against this tool of liberalism is its misuse.⁷ For instance, it rejects its use as maintaining that the real nature of the early Israelite religion is to be discovered by the methodology of "comparative religion." It has compared the religion of Israel to the beliefs of the surrounding nations without being concerned with the former's distinctiveness. Neo-orthodoxy has also reacted against critical scholarship's Hegelian assumption that history is a steady movement from the simple to the complex, from the lower to the higher. Archaeology is showing some of their assumptions to be erroneous. It also objects to the assumption of critical scholarship in maintaining that the Old Testament is a history of man's ideas he has formed about God, rather than its being a history of the way in which God has disclosed Himself by His divine activity among men.⁸ However, though some of the conclusions of destructive criticism are rejected, neo-orthodoxy accepts

⁶Ibid., pp. 79-89.

⁷G. Ernest Wright, "Interpreting the Old Testament," Theology Today, III (July, 1946), pp. 178-179.

⁸Ibid., pp. 178-184.

most of the results of this school of thought. It is the persuasion of neo-orthodoxy that such criticism can do nothing to harm the Biblical truth if it is used properly. Brunner expressed this when he said that to him there is no real conflict at all between such criticism and faith. He stated that so far as higher criticism is concerned all the conflicts which exist between historical criticism and faith are non-existent when closely examined; such "difficulties" are due to either an unjustifiable dogmatic statement of traditional historical views on the part of the Church, or that of a skeptical distortion on the part of critical science.⁹ Biblical criticism, in all of its forms, is accepted, with some variation, among the neo-orthodox circles.

As is quite obvious from the above discussion, the Bible is not a book of infallible truth to neo-orthodoxy. Paul K. Jewett, an authority on the theological views of Emil Brunner, says that to Brunner

. . . The Bible 'is full of errors, contradictions, erroneous opinions concerning human, natural, historical situations. It contains many contradictions in the report about Jesus' life; it is overgrown with legendary material even in the New Testament' (*Religionsphilosophie*, pp. 77f.) Hence the orthodox view of the Scripture, which conceives the Bible as a book of infallible, self-consistent propositions, is impossible for anyone who knows anything.¹⁰

It is Brunner's contention that higher criticism has made impossible the dogma of an infallible Bible.¹¹ This is also the persuasion of the other leading neo-orthodox thinkers, regardless of what section of the neo-orthodox

⁹Emil Brunner, *Revelation and Reason*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 232.

¹⁰Paul K. Jewett, "Emil Brunner and the Bible," *Christianity Today*, I (January 21, 1957), p. 71

¹¹Carl F.H. Henry, *The Protestant Dilemma* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949), p. 60.

camp to which they may belong.

Neo-orthodoxy has contended that Scripture does not contain literal truth, but it does contain "existential" truth. Therefore neo-orthodoxy freely denies a literal interpretation of Scripture even where it directly proclaims an event as an actual historic occurrence.

. . . Reinhold Niebuhr, in Beyond Tragedy, argues in his opening essay that all the great events of Bible history, from creation and the Fall onwards, are deceptive if taken with bald literalism, but profoundly true if taken as mythical, paradoxical expressions of a transcendent divine reality beyond the reach of reason. . . .¹²

. . . Speaking of the first chapters of Genesis, Otto Piper of Princeton Theological Seminary has said: 'Old Testament scholars have recognized for a long time that the narratives and genealogies given in the first chapters of Genesis are not on the same level as historical records. In the first chapters of the Bible, human history is narrated in mythical language.' (God in History, pp. 60-61). In 1953 in his presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature, S.V. McCasland of the University of Virginia observed that 'on all hands we find a willingness to recognize that a good many stories of the Bible are myths and should be so interpreted' (Journal of Biblical Literature, 73:1:7, March, 1954).¹³

Neo-orthodoxy is persuaded that by not giving a literal, historic explanation to Biblical events the vital truths contained in these stories are not effected. Instead it is by such interpretation that the real truth of these portions of Scripture is discovered.

The generally accepted method of neo-orthodox hermeneutics is the principle of existentialism. It has not been the purpose of this writer to go into a detailed discussion of existentialism in this particular section of the paper. This subject is discussed in the section which has dealt with

¹²Walter M. Horton, "Contemporary Protestant Theology and the Bible," The Journal of Religious Thought, XIII (Autumn-Winter, 1955-56), p. 38.

¹³Free, "Archaeology and Neo-Orthodoxy," op. cit., p. 126.

Rudolf Bultmann. Suffice it here to say that existentialism as a means of interpretation refers to the method of giving an exposition to Scripture with man and his existence as the controlling factor.

Existentialism has had a strong influence on the neo-orthodox concept of the Bible. As just recently stated above, Scripture is viewed as containing existential truth but not literal truth. For instance, the writer of the book of Genesis was not writing actual, historical facts. What he wrote was "myth," which is an answer to our present historical existence in distinction to the primeval state which was originally created good by God. In Adam we are not to find the progenitor of the human race, but instead the common human situation, the fact that all men disobey God in their lives. The New Testament is not exempt from this form of thinking, either. For instance heaven and hell are considered as myths.

. . . Heaven is God's dwelling place. This statement intends to express insight that God is not a part of this world but that he is superior, beyond and transcendent. The conception of God's being-beyond is expressed by the mythological assertion of his spatial remoteness. The existentialist interpretation further emphasizes that this is never an objectifying statement but the confession of faith that man is inferior, that the faithful is aware of his own finiteness in thought, intention, and effectiveness. In speaking about God's being-beyond, man expresses his own situation facing God's power as not available to human thinking or action. In a similar way the mythological term "hell" intends to express the being-beyond of the Evil's power and the unbeliever's being-lost.¹⁴

In orthodoxy, Christian faith is grounded upon the authority of the concept of an infallible Bible. This concept of authority, having been destroyed for those of the neo-orthodox camp by classic liberalism has left the existentialist thinkers attempting to restore this lost authority. How-

¹⁴Erich Dinkler, "Existentialist Interpretation of the New Testament," The Journal of Religion, XXXII (April, 1952), p. 91.

ever, crisis theologians are not endeavoring to place this lost authority in the same source in which orthodoxy has placed it, the Bible. Rather neo-orthodoxy has attempted to lodge it in that which it considers the real "Word of God," Jesus Christ. In other words, authority per se is not to be found in propositional statements in the Bible pertaining to ideas about God, Christ, man, sin, redemption, and et cetera. The authority which neo-orthodoxy is seeking to unveil is an authority which is to reside in the central figure of the Bible, Jesus Christ. Neo-orthodoxy is in revolt against placing the contents of the Bible on equal authority with that of God's revelatory act in Jesus Christ.

Without attempting at this point to deal with the doctrine of revelation, it must be pointed out that there is a sense in which Scripture becomes authoritative for crisis theology. There is no place, existentialist thinkers have contended, where God's Word has authoritatively been written down. The Bible is nothing more than a collection of several hundreds of sheets of paper with printing on them, and as such is no different from any other book and has no authority of any kind in and of itself. However, the Bible does have a derived authority.

The derived authority of Scripture comes from the revelation which is in Jesus Christ. The Bible is not significant for what it contains, but for that to which it points, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The Bible contains the documents which are the source of our knowledge of God's revelation, but they themselves are not that revelation. The only sense in which Scripture can be said to have any authority in neo-orthodoxy is that of a derived authority which it has through pointing towards revelation. It

is authoritative only when the revelation, Jesus Christ Himself, is revealed through its words.¹⁵

The neo-orthodox concept of Scripture is not complete without a thorough investigation of its views of inspiration and revelation.

Neo-orthodox View of inspiration

Kenneth S. Kantzer has recently written a series of four articles under the title "Revelation and Inspiration in Neo-Orthodox Theology." In this series of articles the main doctrine discussed throughout was the doctrine of revelation. The doctrine of inspiration was barely touched upon. This seems to be representative of what has taken place in neo-orthodox theology in general.¹⁶ There has been much concern over the doctrine of revelation, but little over that of inspiration. Consequently the doctrine of inspiration is not a well developed and defined form of thought in crisis theology.

Nevertheless there are some ideas concerning inspiration which theologians of the theological view at hand are in general agreement. Though its doctrine of revelation is much more complete than that of inspiration, existential theology does have a doctrine of inspiration.

In neo-orthodox thinking it was not the Scriptures which were inspired,

¹⁵Walter M. Horton, "Neo-Orthodox Conceptions of Biblical Authority," The Journal of Religious Thought, V (Autumn-Winter, 1948), pp. 53-54.

¹⁶Kenneth S. Kantzer, "Revelation and Inspiration in Neo-Orthodoxy," Bibliotheca Sacra A Theological Quarterly. These series were "What is Revelation?," 115 (April, 1958); "The Method of Revelation: How Does God Reveal Himself?," 115 (July, 1958); "Contemporary Thinking About Revelation," 115 (October, 1958); "Neo-Orthodoxy and the Inspiration of Scripture," 116 (January, 1959). It was discovered, after this thesis was written, that Karl Barth has given an extended treatment of the doctrine of inspiration in his Church Dogmatics, Volume I, Part 2, pp. 457-695, particularly pp. 514 ff., 517 f., and 532 (English translation), New York: Charles Scribner & Sons, 1956.

but was rather the writers of the Scriptures. Thus the words of the Bible were not inspired, but those who wrote them were.¹⁷ The Bible itself as an objectively written document cannot, according to existentialistic thinking, claim to be inspired of God.¹⁸

How, then, were the writers of Scripture inspired according to this view? At first the method of inspiration may seem similar to that of the orthodox view. Kantzer maintained that in neo-orthodoxy inspiration is a counterpart of revelation. Revelation, to be such, must contain two factors. It must first be an objective act of God and then a subjective response of man to this act. The objective acts of God forms the basis for revelation. By a divine act of illumination upon the minds of the prophets and apostles the objective acts become revelation to these individuals.¹⁹ When an objective act of God is verified within the mind of the prophet or apostle, then inspiration has taken place.

Though the above may sound very similar to that of orthodoxy, there are actually drastic differences between orthodoxy and neo-orthodoxy. The Biblical writers were historically conditioned, neo-orthodoxy has claimed, and therefore regardless of the fact of inspiration the revelation which they received could not be communicated without allowing for their limitations and

¹⁷J.K.S. Reid, The Authority of Scripture: A Study of the Reformation and Post-Reformation Understanding of the Bible (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, n.d.), p. 166.

¹⁸Kenneth S. Kantzer, "Neo-Orthodoxy and the Inspiration of Scripture," Bibliotheca Sacra A Theological Quarterly, 116 (January, 1959), p. 21.

¹⁹Kenneth S. Kantzer, "The Method of Revelation: How Does God Reveal Himself?," Bibliotheca Sacra A Theological Quarterly, 115 (July, 1958), pp. 220-221.

fallibility. Inspiration does not imply that the writers of Scripture were perfectly harmonized with the mind of God, and therefore does not imply moral perfection nor intellectual infallibility in their writings.²⁰

. . . The Bible is not an 'inspired statement'; nor does God 'go over the head' of His children when He desires to address them or to speak through them. When He gives us the Scriptures, it is indeed something divine that He bestows; but in their creation He does not simply disregard those to and by whom they come. It is their word we have, evoked by and witnessing to His Word, and becoming at His will and pleasure His Word to us. The Bible is no more identifiable with the Word of God than the Church we know is identifiable with the Body of Christ. . . .²¹

The inspiration of the Bible in crisis theology is not an event which has been performed once and for all. It is something which must happen again and again as the great once for all event, Jesus Christ, is preached through the power of the Holy Spirit.²²

. . . The all-important thing in inspiration, as Barth sees it, is the present action of the Spirit giving life and actuality to the apostolic and prophetic word as it is heard and read. In other words, inspiration is not an attribute or state. It is an event. This event has happened in the past, so that we can look back to it; and it will happen again in the future, so that we can also look forward to it. Inspiration itself, however, is the present act between this recollection and expectation. It is the divine act which cannot be seized or stated because as soon as it takes place it becomes again the past which we recollect, and the future which we expect. . . .²³

When the Bible is read with faith one's reading is inspired as truly as the original writing of it was. As it was spoken by the Spirit, so it is read in one's heart by the Spirit. This inspiration is God authenticating

²⁰C.H. Dodd, The Authority of the Bible (London: Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1948), pp. 127-128.

²¹Reid, op. cit., p. 164. ²²Horton, op. cit., p. 35.

²³G.W. Bromiley, "Barth's Doctrine of the Bible," Christianity Today, I (December 24, 1956), p. 15.

His Word to an individual as He enables that one to hear Him speak to him through the Scriptures. When the Bible is thus read in faith and the truth of what is heard or read is recognized, then the reader realizes that he has not experienced an opinion of his own making or private thoughts. An individual's reason and conscience is not destroyed or superseded, but is transformed into something our own powers could not make.²⁴

Neo-orthodox view of revelation

In the neo-orthodox camp it is believed that historical Biblical criticism has opened the doors to a new understanding of the doctrine of revelation which had previously been closed by the theory of verbal inspiration. Though crisis theologians may have individual differences on this doctrine there are also points of common agreement. It is the areas of common agreement which are presented in this paper.

The neo-orthodox doctrine of revelation stands midway between the orthodox theology of the Reformation which is still current in evangelical circles, and the classic liberalism of yesterday.²⁵ Though it is returning to some of the conservative views rejected by liberalism, it nevertheless still has adopted some of the leading liberal ideas about revelation.

Orthodoxy maintains that revelation took place when God's message was given to man, and recorded in writing. Thus, in conservative thought, the Bible itself is believed to be a book of divine revelation; on this ground

²⁴J.R. Macphail, "The Authority of the Bible," Scottish Journal of Theology, 9 (March, 1956), p. 25.

²⁵Henry, The Protestant Dilemma, op. cit., p. 51.

of belief it is held that the Bible is equated with and is the Word of God written. Existential theologians, however, have rejected this view of revelation, and do not believe that what the Bible contains is divine revelation. It is not to be equated with, or is it, the Word of God.

In existentialist theology revelation is never a body of truth or a set of propositions. Instead it is always an act or an event in which God discloses His person.²⁶ The Bible itself is not revelation, but a record of revelation, of what God has done in history in revealing Himself. It is in this sense that the Bible can be said to contain revelation but is not itself revelation. It is merely a witness to revelation.

. . . The Christian message is a message about a revelation of God in history and it is in the Bible that these documents are preserved which are the sources of our knowledge of that historical revelation. . . . But the Bible must never be taken for that revelation itself.²⁷

Revelation, then, in crisis theology consists of God's mighty acts in which He has revealed Himself by breaking through into human history and human experience. Revelation as an act or recital has been only briefly discussed in this section of the paper. It has received more complete treatment in the section of this paper dealing with the hermeneutical principles of the neo-orthodox theologian, George E. Wright. As acts, or recital, revelation are those facts which are inferred from God's activity in the history of the human race. For example, the freeing of the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage and the gift of the land as an inheritance were the chief events of the

²⁶Kantzer, "Neo-Orthodoxy and the Inspiration of Scripture," op. cit., p. 20.

²⁷Gordon D. Kaufman, "The Ground of Biblical Authority: Six Theses," The Journal of Bible and Religion, XIV (January, 1956), p. 30.

Old Testament. Believed to be the handiwork of God upon the Israelite nation, inferences were then drawn from these events of God. The Exodus was interpreted by Israel to mean that since Israel was an obscure group with nothing whatever to commend it to the world, God had shown a peculiar, unexplainable, and unmerited grace which drew this people to Him in a special relationship. This developed into the doctrine of the chosen people, or election. From this event also arose the apprehension of the grace and righteousness of God. The land of Canaan itself was not owned by Israel as a natural right, it was a gift from God. From this was derived the Israelite doctrine of property and inheritance. Thus what is known of God is not discovered from propositional statements of Scripture, but from inferences which are drawn about Him from the way in which He has acted in history, i.e., from an interpretation of the historical events.²⁸

The crowning act of God's revelatory events is seen in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Here God has given to man the most perfect revelation of Himself possible. This was the climax of God's acts of redemption, the goal towards which all of God's previous redemptive acts in history pointed. This crowning act of revelation is known to Reinhold Niebuhr as "special" revelation, or God's self-disclosure of Himself in Christ. This is regarded by him as the final "word" which God has spoken to man.²⁹

The purpose of the Bible, the record of God's acts, is to give occa-

²⁸G. Ernest Wright, "Wherein Lies the Unity of the Bible?," The Journal of Bible and Religion, XX (July, 1952), pp. 195-196.

²⁹Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, Vol. II (London: Nisbet & Co. Ltd., 1943), p. 69.

sign for a personal "encounter" between an individual and God. Here is evidenced the meaning of neo-orthodoxy's statement that though not itself revelation, Scripture is a witness to revelation. In its witnessing to the mighty acts of God Scripture can become revelation as an encounter is induced in the one who reads these recorded events.

Scripture is thus only "potential" revelation. It can "become" revelation only when there is a subjective response to these acts of God on the part of the individual believer, and God is actually seen through the objective acts recorded in the Bible. However, a portion which may become revelation to an individual one day may not be so the next hour, day, or week. There must be a fresh, personal encounter each time one reads Scripture if revelation to that individual is to take place. Besides this, what may become revelation to one believer may never become revelation to another. Only when God acts subjectively in the mind of the reader and creates an internal response to His objective acts in history recorded in Scripture can the Bible become revelation for him. Until such an encounter takes place the authority of the Bible remains precisely the same as that of any other book.³⁰

Neo-orthodoxy implies, if not directly states, that when this revelation takes place it is identical to that which took place in the original writers of the two Testaments. The general conviction of crisis theologians seems to be that ". . . the man who today reads the witness to revelation and responds as did the prophets and apostles enters into the same experience of revelation. God becomes reality to him as he did to them."³¹

³⁰Kaufman, op. cit., pp. 25-30.

³¹George Eldon Ladd, "Revelation, History, and the Bible," Christi-

. . . Where we read of such inspired men, we ourselves become inspired.
 . . . We are touched by the same flame as they knew and caught up into
 the religious experience which they enjoyed and which now they communi-
 cate to us in and through their writings. . . .³²

II. HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES OF TWO NEO-ORTHODOX THEOLOGIANS

Rudolf Bultmann and George Ernest Wright, two leading neo-orthodox thinkers, have been chosen to show how principles of neo-orthodox hermeneutics have actually been applied to the Scriptures. These two men represent two groups in neo-orthodoxy, Bultmann the more liberal position and Wright the more conservative viewpoint. Both have original ideas to present which are, in general, fairly representative of the persuasion of other such theologians, though of course there are some who may reject the main tenets of one or both of the men. Bultmann's main idea is that of mythology and demythologizing, while Wright contributes the thought of the acts or recitals of God. Both men's hermeneutical principles are governed throughout by the main thesis of their thought.

Rudolf Bultmann.

On the Continent, at the forefront of all European theological discussion today, stands the figure of Rudolf Bultmann, New Testament form critic and theologian. In an article written in the Spring of 1956 it was stated that whereas theologians on the Continent were once classified as Barthians, anti-Barthians, semi-Barthians, and so forth, the name Bultmann has presently

anity Today, I (September 30, 1957), p. 7.

³²Reid, op. cit., p. 167.

replaced the name Barth.³³ Whereas several years ago it was the voice of Karl Barth to which the ears of the theological world were tuned, today it may be that the voice of Rudolf Bultmann is outshouting that of the founder of crisis theology. Since the end of World War II his idea of demythologizing has occupied the center of the stage of Continental theology.

However, the ideas of Rudolf Bultmann have not been limited to the theologians on the Continent. His voice, opinions, convictions, and ideas are now readily being heard and heeded by many theologians within the United States. This is evidenced by a glimpse through recent issues of American theological journals which have published many articles pertaining to the ideas which this Continental theologian has set forth.

It is because Rudolf Bultmann is a major voice, if not "the" major voice today in Protestant theological circles, and because his system deals directly with hermeneutics, that he has been chosen as one of the theologians to represent neo-orthodox hermeneutical principles. Bultmann works mainly in the area of the New Testament, whereas George Ernest Wright confines his work largely to the Old Testament. Bultmann's work is important for an understanding of contemporary neo-orthodox hermeneutics in the New Testament field. His writings, especially his more recent ones, marks one of the most important moments in theological thinking for generations.³⁴

As a Neo-orthodox theologian. In the year 1952 it was Karl Barth's

³³John Priest, "Bultmann and Exegesis," The Drew Gateway, XXVI (Spring, 1956), p. 98.

³⁴Ronald Gregor Smith, "What is Demythologizing?" Theology Today, X (April, 1953), p. 34.

opinion that Bultmann was not of his dialectical school of crisis theology. In fact, he felt that his "Entmythologisierung" was the symbol of a violent comeback of modernism reacting against dialectical theology.³⁵ This writer has discovered nothing to indicate that Karl Barth has since changed his opinion. Bultmann, in his own thinking, stands between the old-fashioned conservatism on the one hand and the old-fashioned liberalism on the other hand,³⁶ which is the general area of those of neo-orthodox persuasion. It is the general opinion that Rudolf Bultmann does not belong to the school of liberalism, but to that of the crisis or dialectical theology.³⁷

Present emphasis on Bultmann. The present emphasis on Rudolf Bultmann's theological concepts had its start with his essay on New Testament and Mythology, which was written in 1941. The problem which Bultmann put forth in this work is the problem of conveying the communication of the gospel in the thought form of contemporary thinking. Present day thinking, he has claimed, is not that of the thought patterns in which the New Testament was written. Its first century language, Bultmann continually has affirmed, is "mythological thought." This "mythological" language of the New Testament must be restated in contemporary mental categories. Immediately involved is the problem of hermeneutics.

³⁵R.A. Egon Hessel, "Is Christianity a Myth," The Christian Century, LIX (September 3, 1952), p. 993.

³⁶George W. Davis, Existentialism and Theology (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), p. 2.

³⁷Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, trans. Louise Pettibone Smith and Erminie Huntress (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. v.

Bultmann's mythology and demythologizing. To understand Bultmann's hermeneutical principles it is absolutely necessary to first understand his concept of "myth." Bultmann firmly believed that most of the New Testament, especially the gospels, contained a very large amount of "myth," and thus has expressed itself by and large in mythological thought. Bultmann has maintained that the contemporary man today cannot intellectually understand such myth forms, and must therefore be interpreted into present day thought.

What Bultmann has essentially meant by myth and mythical thought was any expression of the supernatural or otherworldly which is found in the New Testament. It is the use of certain outmoded categories to express the other-worldly in terms of this world.

It is Bultmann's belief that the New Testament has derived its mythical elements largely from two sources of mythical patterns which were contemporary with the New Testament writers. These two sources were the Jewish apocalyptic notion of a final day of the Lord at which time the earth would melt and the redemption of Israel would be realized, and secondly, the Gnostic myth of the Greeks which spoke of a pre-existent divine being who humbles himself to bring redemption to mankind.³⁸ Thus it was Bultmann's contention that the world view given by the New Testament is a mythical view which man today cannot understand because his thinking is scientific and is not mythological.

First century thought forms of the New Testament must be translated into thought patterns of our day. No longer, Bultmann maintained, can man

³⁸ Robert Paul Roth, "Bultmann: Genius or Apostle?," Christianity Today, I (September 16, 1957), p. 15.

believe in the literal Biblical view of a three storied universe consisting of heaven, the abode of God and celestial beings; the earth, where man is pitted between two supernatural powers, God and Satan; and hell, where man is damned to eternal suffering and destruction. Nor are the miracles any longer acceptable to the modern mind, even though they are literally said to have taken place in the New Testament. Modern, scientific man cannot accept, according to Bultmann, much of the New Testament teaching about Jesus Christ, of whom the Bible strongly speaks in mythical figures. His pre-existence, His omni-character, His death, His descent into hell, His resurrection, His ascent to heaven—all of that which expresses a supernatural, divine element about Christ is mythological. Especially repulsive to Bultmann is the eschatological element presented in the New Testament, such as the second coming on the clouds, the dramatic final judgment, heaven, hell, et cetera. These are mythical and do not actually refer to literal, futuristic, cosmic events. These confessions of faith are given in human terms, in the language of the time of the writer, with the terminology, imagination, and pictures of that age, and therefore are expressions of that day and not of the contemporary way of thinking. If modern, scientific man is to comprehend the New Testament, then, Bultmann believed, it must be interpreted in his thoughts and not those of the first century.

The Biblical texts containing myth were understood as mythical by the writers of the New Testament, for they were accustomed to thinking mythologically.³⁹ One author even stated that at the time these passages were

³⁹Gustaf Wingren, Theology in Conflict, trans. Eric H. Wahlstrom (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1958), p. 48.

written, myth, instead of literal statements, was used simply because non-mythical and mythical ways of thinking were not yet distinct. There were no other terms at that period which could be used to express the truth of the myth in another form.⁴⁰ With the passing of time the mythological meaning lost its intended meaning to later readers, who, in place of a mythological interpretation, applied a literalistic interpretation to the texts. By doing this the "kerygma" soon became lost, and was covered with wrong ideas. It was Bultmann's contention that this "kerygma" which got lost when the mythical meaning of passages were forgotten, must be again rediscovered if the New Testament is to speak to men today. This leads to Bultmann's main thesis of interpretation, that of his famous "demythologizing."

To Bultmann, the eschatological and mythical teaching of the New Testament as a whole contained a still deeper meaning which is concealed under the cover and wrappings of mythology. The mythological concepts themselves must be abandoned, but their deeper meaning retained. This is accomplished by demythologizing.

What does the term "demythologize" mean? It refers to separating or disentangling the "kerygma" from the myth. It is the process of using form-criticism as an effort to arrive at the true teachings of the New Testament, the kerygma, which lies under the layers of myth. The kerygma is that which is the very heart of the Christian message itself. It is the proclamation of the event of God in Jesus Christ.

To Bultmann "demythologize" is but another expression for "interpre-

⁴⁰John Macquarrie, "Bultmann's Existential Approach to Theology," Union Seminary Quarterly Review, XII (May, 1957), p. 20.

tation of myth." Whereas liberalism would eliminate myth on the grounds that it has nothing relevant for contemporary man, Bultmann would demand not that myth be eliminated, but rather that criticism which is in alignment with contemporary thought and science be used to re-interpret it. Demythologizing takes the modern-world view as the criterion for the interpretation of the Scriptures and the Christian message.⁴¹ It was Bultmann's persuasion that all the supernatural and other-worldly elements of the Scripture can be placed in the category of myth and interpreted as such without in the slightest degree surrendering the essence of Christianity. He maintained that the reason for this was that the essence of Christianity does not lie in a literal interpretation of these "myths," but rather in the proclamation of the kerygma which is wrapped within the mythological thought of the New Testament. It becomes evident that Bultmann's idea of demythologizing is actually a system of hermeneutics.

It is Bultmann's firm belief that his grounds for demythologizing rests upon solid Scriptural evidence. Even though the Apostle Paul firmly believed himself that the eschatological events he related were to be literally fulfilled, he was still to begin the process of demythologizing. It began when Paul made the declaration that the turning point from the old world to the new was not a matter of a future event, but had taken place in the coming of Jesus Christ (Galations 4:4). It was Paul's opinion that the expectations and promises of the ancient prophets were fulfilled with the proclamation of the gospel. John, Bultmann has maintained, was even more radical in his

⁴¹ Rudolf Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 35.

demythologizing than was Paul.⁴² The Apostle John

. . . gives up the expectation of future cosmic events . . . For John the resurrection of the dead and the last judgment are present in the coming of Jesus . . . The believer has already passed the judgment, and he who does not believe is already condemned [John 3:18]. The believer is already resurrected from death . . .⁴³

The coming and departing of Jesus was the eschatological event for John (John 3:19; 12:31). Bultmann has even maintained that for John the resurrection, Pentecost, and the parousia of Jesus are not individual, separate acts, but are one and the same event, and those who believe have already eternal life (John 3:18,36; 5:25; 11:25ff). He has stated that in John the false teachers play the role of the mythological figure of the anti-Christ described in II Thessalonians 2:7-12. Here mythology has been transposed into history. Through such above illustrations Bultmann has been of the persuasion that demythologizing had its beginning in the New Testament itself, and therefore demythologizing is justified today.⁴⁴

In his work of demythologizing, according to George W. Davis, Bultmann has attempted to present a kerygmatic theology. This is a theology which would combine a critical historical approach to the Scriptures (an approach which allows for and fully recognizes the most advanced scholarship) with the revelational content which produced the Scriptures. By the combination of this critical scholarship with an existential interpretation of the kerygma, Bultmann has been persuaded that a true statement is given of God's word to

⁴²Ibid., pp. 32-44.

⁴³Rudolf Bultmann, The Presence of Eternity: History and Eschatology (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 47.

⁴⁴Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, op. cit., pp. 32-34.

man.⁴⁵ The kernel of the Scriptures has thus been discovered.

Bultmann's existentialism. Bultmann's methodology does not end with the discovery of the kerygma. This kerygma must be interpreted in contemporary thought forms. This, Bultmann has contended, must be done existentially. By this is meant that interpretation must be performed with one object in mind, that of man and his existence. This is Bultmann's "existential" hermeneutics.

Bultmann's existential approach to the interpretation of the New Testament has been strongly influenced largely by two men, Soren Kierkegaard and Martin Heidegger. These two men helped to form the philosophical basis of his theology. Bultmann is quite open about the fact that in his demythologizing he has made very strong use of Martin Heidegger's existentialist philosophy.⁴⁶ Through applying Heidegger's thoughts to the New Testament, Bultmann believed that he had built up a unified and systematic anthropology. By thus applying existential philosophy to theology he was persuaded that he arrived at an ontological understanding of man. It becomes impossible to differentiate between anthropology and hermeneutics in his system.⁴⁷ Because of this close relationship it is not difficult to realize why Bultmann called his principle of interpretation "existential" hermeneutics.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Davis, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

⁴⁶Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, p. 45.

⁴⁷Wingren, op. cit., p. 129.

⁴⁸George L. Hunt (ed.), Ten Makers of Modern Protestant Thought (New York: Association Press, 1958), p. 104.

Bultmann believed that the New Testament appeals to the same dimensions of depth and self-understanding in men to which existential philosophy also appeals.⁴⁹ He was of the persuasion that in the New Testament the important and decisive thing is not the historical, factual events and ideas which it relates. Its importance lies in its effort to help man understand his existence and the world of events about him. Because the Bible itself is concerned with the understanding of human existence Bultmann believed that the only philosophy relevant to an adequate stating of the New Testament in contemporary thought was existential philosophy.⁵⁰

United with Bultmann's existential hermeneutics is his ideas of the need of asking the proper questions when interpreting the New Testament. Since the Bible has an anthropological frame of reference, his objective was to discover what the Bible had to say to man. Therefore one should ask questions which the Bible itself is answering.⁵¹ The questions one brings to the interpretation of a text are very important. They must be of an existential nature, questions which pertain to one's personal existence. Much perplexity has arisen in the past simply because the wrong questions have been asked. To ask of the Biblical record, "what actually happened?" with the pre-supposition that the New Testament is actually factual and historic in most of its statements is the wrong category of questions. Instead, questions from an anthropomorphic category should be asked, such as "what does this mean for my existence?", or "what understanding of my own being does this show me?"

⁴⁹Ibid. ⁵⁰Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, op. cit., p. 57.

⁵¹Hunt, op. cit., p. 103.

and "does this idea challenge and change my life for time and eternity?" Only as one applies such questions to the Biblical record will he be able to interpret the New Testament existentially.

Producing systematic, propositional statements from Scripture is not the object of Bultmann's existential interpretation. What his method has aimed at is producing an understanding of Biblical events in such a manner that will bring about an encounter between man and God and demand of him that a decision be made here and now. Every affirmation which can be made by the discovered kerygma, every teaching which the Bible proclaims, involves an assertion about human life. To Bultmann the Bible was not a record of factual historic events, but an interpretation of these events, not propositionally, but existentially.⁵² In his demythologizing he has attempted to substitute anthropology for theology, and to interpret theological affirmations as assertions about human existence. This is seen in a statement which he made about God, when he said that ". . . only such statements about God are legitimate as express the existential relation between God and man. Statements which speak of God's actions as cosmic events are illegitimate . . ."⁵³

Bultmann's hermeneutical principles and Scripture. An attempt has been made in this section of the paper to relate Bultmann's principles of hermeneutics to actual Biblical themes.

Eschatology. The area of eschatology has been considered first

⁵²Ibid., p. 109.

⁵³Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, op. cit., p. 69.

because this idea seems to be Bultmann's main area of demythologizing. It is well known that Bultmann has found the entire scheme of futuristic eschatology in the New Testament writings, when interpreted literally, as unacceptable. All events in the New Testament which have an apocalyptic coloring to them are considered myth by Bultmann. Here can be seen the strong influence of Heidegger and modern existentialism upon Bultmann. All eschatological ideas have to do, not with future, yet-to-be events which will one day take place in the realm of time, but instead with man's life here and now. In this method of thought everything is transferred from the popular idea of a literal interpretation of eschatological events to a contemporary, existential understanding of the self. For instance, the Biblical idea of judgment is that it is not a cosmic event to come in time, but is rather the fact of Jesus and His call to faith.⁵⁴

In referring to Bultmann's position on eschatology in general, it can be stated that his view is that

... the final significance of the eschatological message ... [is] that man now stands under the necessity of decision, that his "Now" is always for him the last hour, in which his decision against the world and for God is demanded, in which every claim of his own is to be silenced.
...⁵⁵

The kerygma of the myth expresses a summons to decision now about our existence in the world. When the New Testament speaks of the last times it is speaking of the urgency of decision which takes place when man is confronted by God, at which time the individual stands under judgment and his

⁵⁴Fritz Hofmann, "Theology and Myth in the New Testament," Theology Digest, III (Winter, 1955), p. 12.

⁵⁵Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, op. cit., p. 131.

old world is about to have a catastrophic climax. Thus the eschatological event of the future becomes a happened event of the now at the moment of decision.

The eschatological event in Bultmann's theology is Jesus Christ. He is the action of God by which the end of the old world has its end set. It is through the preaching of the Christian Church that this eschatological event becomes present ever and again in faith. Jesus is the eschatological event, not as an established fact of past time as modern man conceives time, but as repeatedly present, continually addressing man through the preaching of the Church. By Him the old world has reached its end for the believer, who becomes "a new creature in Jesus Christ" (II Corinthians 5:17). The old world reached its end when the "old man" became a "new man" a freed man.⁵⁶

The whole of Bultmann's eschatology can be summed up in the word "decision."⁵⁷ The act of God is the bringing of the salvation event to man and encountering him with this event, Jesus Christ. The crucial eschatological event takes place when man is encountered by God in Christ, at which time man is faced with the crisis of decision, a decision which, if it be in faith, can give him a new understanding of his existence.⁵⁸

. . . this decision is no choice between two possibilities which lie equally at man's disposal; it is a true crisis, that is, the Either-or between two possibilities, in which the "old man" leaves his position of independence and comes under the sovereignty of another. The sovereign

⁵⁶Bultmann, The Presence of Eternity: History and Eschatology, op. cit., p. 156.

⁵⁷Wingren, op. cit., p. 55.

⁵⁸William R. Baird, Jr., "Current Trends in New Testament Study," The Journal of Religion, XXXIX (July, 1959), p. 140.

in both cases is God, either the angry, judging God, or the gracious God. . . .⁵⁹

The "either-or" of the decision is either life with Christ, or life without Christ. Life without Christ is a life without faith; it is a trust in the world which gives a false sense of security; it is a life of anxiety which seeks security through confidence in the flesh. Life with Christ is a life which has confidence, not in the flesh but in God; it is a life which has been made open to the future and freed from the past by the forgiveness of sins.⁶⁰ When one faces the decision squarely, and decides for Christ, then that individual has found his authentic responsible existence. Such existence means faith that the unseen God has confronted one, and opens up his future to him and offers life instead of death. It is an existence of faith which means a radical self-commitment to God in the expectation that all will come from Him and nothing from ourselves.⁶¹ It is at this moment of confrontation and decision that revelation has taken place.⁶² Here God has revealed His love which frees man from himself for the future. This is man's salvation, which does not rely on what Christ has done at the cross, but what He has done in the "encounter."⁶³ The Bible refers to this event in eschatological terminology. It is in this encounter-event that the world and its

⁵⁹Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, op. cit., pp. 131-132.

⁶⁰Smith, op. cit., pp. 42-43.

⁶¹Roger Stimson, "The Thought of Rudolf Bultmann," The Drew Gateway, XXVI (Spring, 1956), p. 81.

⁶²Hunt, op. cit., p. 105.

⁶³Oscar Cullmen, "Rudolf Bultmann's Concept of Myth and the New Testament," Theology Digest, IV (Autumn, 1956), p. 138.

history comes to its culmination and the one who has had this faith encounter becomes a new creature.⁶⁴ Eschatology is thus demythologized from a cosmic future event to an existential meaning. It can be said that Bultmann's eschatological views may be conceived in terms of realized eschatology.⁶⁵

The cross. To understand Bultmann's theology of the cross one must understand his interpretation of history. Two German words which denote different ideas of history are used by him. These words are historisch and geschichtlich. By historisch Bultmann means occurrences which actually happened at a definite time and particular place in history. By geschichtlich Bultmann is referring to the existential significance of an event for man here and now. This is the history which is personal history, arising from a personal encounter with God in his saving act.

In his theology Bultmann has generally used the ideas contained in the expression geschichtlich. However, he does not deny the validity of the term historisch in certain, specific instances.

Both meanings have been employed by Bultmann in his treatment of the cross. It is historisch in the sense that it is an actual historic event which actually took place under Pilate. However, to believe in the cross as historisch is not the same as believing in it as geschichtlich, which is how Bultmann has maintained that it must be "experienced." To have faith in it as mere historisch is not to perceive the existential meaning which it

⁶⁴G.R. Beasley-Murray, "Demythologized Eschatology," Theology Today, XIV (April, 1957), p. 63.

⁶⁵Priest, op. cit., p. 110.

must express. As far as historisch is concerned, the cross is nothing more than the disastrous end of one of the world's great men who died the death of a martyr.⁶⁶

To have faith in the cross as geschichtlich is to perceive the cross in terms of one's personal existence. But to speak of the cross in this manner is also to declare that the cross has a mythical character to it. This can be seen in the terms in which the cross is expressed as God's activity of redemption, e.g., "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29) or the death of Christ being to "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:26). This is further seen by the Biblical usage of such terms as justification, reconciliation, redemption, salvation, propitiation, and so forth. All such treatment of the cross must have an existential interpretation if it is to be understood by contemporary man. What, then, is such an interpretation of the cross?

According to Bultmann the meaning of the cross goes beyond mere forgiveness of sins. The cross means that the sufferings of Christ are not to be located in historisch, but they are to be geschichtlich with me in the now, the present. Through such an experience with Christ in the now, the individual is to be redeemed from a thoughtless, self-centered life, and transformed by God into His servant for this present age. In becoming contemporaneous with the confronted individual, the cross is authentically to repeat itself in one's experience.

But how is the cross experienced as geschichtlich instead of merely

⁶⁶Ned B. Stonehouse, "The Pathos of Religious Liberalism," Christianity Today, I (April 29, 1957), p. 5.

historisch? The media in which this takes place, according to George W. Davis, can be such means as the daily lives of Christians, baptism and the Lord's supper, and the proclamation of the gospel within the Christian Church. It is through such means, Davis has stated, that the cross becomes an ever present reality.⁶⁷

The resurrection. It is a generally known fact that the resurrection, in Bultmann's theology, is but a part of his conception of the cross. Yet it must be treated separately as it throws light upon the cross-event which it could not do if treated as one theme.

The resurrection in Bultmann's thinking is not an event historisch, but rather an event geschichtlich. Bultmann denies that this event ever actually took place in the realm of time. The important thing is the existential meaning which this event has for man.

To the disciples the resurrection did not mean, according to Bultmann, that Christ had literally risen from the dead. What it did mean to them was faith that death could not conquer the Son of God, and that He was not dead, but living. The mythological aspect of the resurrection is the empty tomb, the meeting of Christ with his disciples after the resurrection and manifesting a concrete physical reality in their presence, though He was able to miraculously move about as no human could, as shown by his passing through a wall. Thus the resurrection is a matter of faith, and as a matter of faith it is to be interpreted existentially. How has Bultmann interpreted it in this manner?

⁶⁷Davis, op. cit., pp. 57-60.

Through the hearing of preaching the resurrection of Christ is to be repeated in the lives of those confronted by this event. The event of the resurrection forms a single, indivisible cosmic event with that of the cross, in which, through the word of preaching, we are faced by God's grace and understand our existence in terms of being crucified and risen with Christ.⁶⁸ When thus confronted the dead arise and the end has come.⁶⁹ The unique event of Jesus Christ is not his literal physical resurrection, but is rather the fact that in this event of Christ's resurrection the future death, judgment, and resurrection of the believer takes place in the here and now when encountered by God in His saving act. This, Bultmann has taught, is the faith of the Easter event.

A few other brief illustrations of Bultmann's hermeneutical application to Scriptures should be sufficient to show how this existential thought has been put into practice.

The event of Christ. Much in the New Testament is mythical concerning the Person and work of Christ other than his death and resurrection. Bultmann would classify as mythical the pre-existence of Christ, the virgin birth, His miracles, et cetera. The myth is to be discarded but the kerygma maintained and interpreted existentially.

What the event of Christ means is that man is living an unauthentic existence apart from Christ. It is a life of sin. Man in his own power cannot live the authentic life. It is here that God steps in in Jesus Christ, "the Word made flesh." The event of Christ is the proclamation and revelation

⁶⁸Stonehouse, loc. cit. ⁶⁹Wingren, op. cit., p. 133.

of the love of God. It expresses the fact that man can live authentically as God wants man to live. It is the love of God realized in Christ.

The Spirit. Though the New Testament speaks of the Spirit as a supernatural power in operation in the natural world of human affairs, Bultmann is persuaded that this is only expressions of mythological language. What is really meant by the Spirit transcends the first century language of Scripture. What is really meant, when demythologized, is the possibility of a new life which is opened by faith. The Spirit expresses the fact that by deliberate resolve a new life may be appropriated.⁷⁰

God, Heaven, Hell, Satan. According to mythological concepts in the Bible God has His residence in heaven. In a crude manner this mythical idea expresses the insight that God is transcendent, He is beyond this world. In the mythical teaching about hell, the idea expressed is that of the transcendence of evil as the tremendous power which can afflict mankind again and again. Bultmann has claimed that when the New Testament teaches that men are delivered into the power of Satan and evil spirits, it is speaking in its customary mythological expressions. The existential meaning, however, is that wickedness and evil arise when men no longer are masters of themselves. The conception of Satan as ruler over the world expresses the insight that evil is not just here and there in the world, but that all of the various evils make up one single power which is the result of the actions of men, which makes an atmosphere, a spiritual tradition, which effects and over-

⁷⁰Priest, op. cit., pp. 109-110.

whelms every man. The power of evil over us is not due to the mythological concept of Satan and his demons, but rather the consequences and effects of our sins become a power which dominate and control our actions, and man is incapable of freeing himself from sin's control. The evil for which each individual is separately responsible is never-the-less a power which enslaves in a mysterious manner every individual member of the race.⁷¹

Creation. Israel, like all other nations, had its myths of creation. Such myths are the sources which lie behind the creation stories recorded in the first and second chapters of Genesis. These stories are geschichtlich and not historisch. The Old Testament doctrine of creation has an existential meaning. It expresses a sense of man's present situation. Man is hedged in by the incomprehensible power of Almighty God. By demythologizing this story the truth arrived at is that the story shows what God is doing all the time for mankind. As God once created man, and gave him life, so he is doing this again and again in the mother's womb. If that breath is withdrawn, then man returns to the dust of the earth from which he sprung. When God restores that breath, man rises again and the face of the earth is restored by God. Thus this doctrine of creation aims at expressing a sense within man of utter dependence on God.⁷²

The Fall. This too is an event which is to have a geschichtlich and not a historisch interpretation. The testimony of the New Testament as to

⁷¹Bultmann, Jesus Christ and Mythology, op. cit., pp. 20-21.

⁷²Rudolf Bultmann, Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting, trans. R.H. Fuller (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1956), pp. 16-18.

man's fall has no historical basis, but has a meaning existentially. It is to be understood as a symbol of the fall of man from the good.⁷³ It symbolizes the truth that all men sin, not by accident, but by choice.

Criticism of Bultmann's hermeneutical principles. Rudolf Bultmann's theology and method of interpretation has received various criticism. He has been criticized by Lutheran theologians and Church councils for casting doubt on the historical events of Scripture upon which faith is based.⁷⁴ Julius Schniewind has attacked both Bultmann's premises and his deductions. Helmut Thielicke started the Lutheran attack by discussing Bultmann's concept of faith. Prenter attacked Bultmann's theology, stating that Bultmann does not remove mythology, but merely interprets it existentially instead of cosmologically. Karl Barth entered the scene, who claimed that Bultmann's Christology is absorbed into soteriology with a complete loss of the Christological concern in the preoccupation with one's own salvation and its processes. Fritz Buri maintained that Bultmann needed to "dekerygmazize" his demythologization. Jaspers attacked Bultmann's premises and denied their right to present themselves as philosophy.⁷⁵ Aside from such criticisms there are criticisms which directly pertain to the subject at hand, that of Bultmann's hermeneutical principles. These are stated in the following paragraphs.

⁷³Bultmann, The Presence of Eternity: History and Eschatology, op. cit., p. 61.

⁷⁴Mertice M. James and Dorothy Brown (editors), The Book Review Digest (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1955), p. 351.

⁷⁵Peter L. Berger, "Demythologization—Crisis in Continental Theology," The Review of Religion, IX (November, 1955), pp. 17-19.

William R. Baird, Jr., stated that Bultmann has frequently been charged with subjectivity, as he is believed by some of his critics to have read his existential views of Heidegger into his interpretation of the New Testament. Bultmann has simply answered that this is not so, but that what philosophers are saying is the same thing the New Testament is saying, both independently of one another.⁷⁶

It is the opinion of this writer that Bultmann's hermeneutical methods have clearly revealed this element of subjectivism. His use of form criticism and his pre-conceived philosophical ideas have freely enabled Bultmann to reject as literal and historic whatever he subjectively believed to be inconsistent with his methods. Through his method of anthropological exegesis he has given existential interpretations to certain events and ideas rather than give them a literal interpretation. Two good examples of this is seen in his treatment of the cross and the resurrection. Both have validity for being chronological events which took place in time, as the New Testament puts both events on an equal historical and factual basis. However, by mere subjectivism, Bultmann has only given the cross a true historical basis while at the same moment denying that the resurrection has any historical fact whatever. Yet even at this the cross has no actual meaning if interpreted literally, and in his methodology it has been given the same existential treatment as the resurrection. This subjectivism has been shown in his treatment of other Biblical themes also, which themes have appeared earlier in this chapter. Though these themes are spoken of as literal truths, Bultmann, by his own subjective

⁷⁶Baird, Jr., op. cit., p. 148.

ideas, has given them existential interpretations.

Another contention of this writer is that Bultmann's use of existential hermeneutics is substituting man's theology for Biblical theology. Biblical events and ideas of importance from a Biblical point of view when taken literally are given an altogether different perspective when seen existentially. For instance, the Biblical ideas of redemption are relegated by existentialism from the work God performed in Christ on the cross to a subjective response which man makes in faith when he makes his decision and becomes an authentic individual. This treatment of the cross is strongly reacted against by some theologians such as Oscar Cullmann. Cullmann claimed that such is not actually the biblical position for it was the actual death itself which was important to the first Christians; it was this event which was their source of redemption, independent of themselves.⁷⁷ The resurrection has received similar treatment. It has been reduced from an event in man's final redemption to a mere subjective and individualistic passing from death to life through the encounter with God.

A criticism which is frequently raised against Bultmann's method of hermeneutics is his use of the "ecclesiastical redactor." This is another proof of the subjectivism of Bultmann. He has used this tool of form criticism to eliminate whatever does not fit in with his theological and philosophical views. For example, whenever the futurist eschatology of John's Gospel contradicts his realized eschatology in John 6:39,40,44, and 12:47 Bultmann pleads ecclesiastical redaction. This also can be seen by his declaring that

⁷⁷Cullmann, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

these references to the Jewish concept of an atoning sacrifice in the New Testament are late theological accretions. This is because they do not align with his theory that John used a Gnostic representation for his message.⁷⁸

W.F. Albright has reacted against this principle of Bultmann's, and has stated that he has absolutely no foundation for his assertion that those passages which contain traditional apocalyptic eschatology in John are later additions by the ecclesiastical redaction of the Gospel. This Gospel, Albright claimed, does not, as Bultmann has stated, reflect an imaginary early Christian or even pre-Christian Gnosticism.⁷⁹

The work of ecclesiastical redaction is seen frequently throughout the works of Bultmann. For instance, Bultmann regards Mark 9:1 not as an actual saying of Christ, but as an ascription given to Him by the earliest Christian community. The story of the rich man and Lazarus is probably not a genuine part of the preaching of Jesus.⁸⁰ There is much accredited as being Jesus' sayings which have nothing in common with the essential characteristics of Jesus' preaching, and are therefore probably not His, e.g., Luke 12:6-7, 22-31; Matthew 6:25-32; 10:29-31.⁸¹ It cannot be determined how much of the Lord's prayer was actually formulated by Christ.⁸² Those predictions which Christ made of His coming death as being willed by God and necessary for salvation, were put into the mouth of Jesus by the Church.⁸³ The stories of

⁷⁸ Ibid., loc. cit.

⁷⁹ W.F. Albright, "Bultmann's History and Eschatology," Journal of Biblical Literature, LXXVII (September, 1958), p. 247.

⁸⁰ Bultmann, Jesus and the Word, op. cit., p. 104.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 160. ⁸² Ibid., p. 180. ⁸³ Ibid., p. 170.

the calling of the first disciples as found in Mark 1:16-20; 2:14, are legends.⁸⁴ Paul's speech on Mars Hill was placed in his mouth by the author of Acts.⁸⁵ Form criticism has played an extremely important part in enabling Bultmann to mold the Scriptures into his pre-conceived philosophical form.

The last criticism made is entirely that of the writer of this paper. As Bultmann was studied this writer wondered if his principles of interpretation weren't similar to that of allegorization. This has seemed to be the case, at least to a degree, to this writer. To give the meaning to some passages of Scripture as Bultmann has done, such as has been illustrated earlier in this paper, seems to involve the principle of allegorization. The interpretations which can be given in the process of demythologizing can and will be many and various, according to what each individual interpreter believes to be the kerygmatic truth lying under the many layers of myth. How can allegorization be avoided when each man gives his own demythologized interpretation? There has not been evidenced anywhere any governing criteria which would guarantee the same interpretation through the existential method of interpretation.

To say, in the process of demythologizing, that "this means that" is certainly a form of allegorization if not direct allegorization itself. In the following paragraph concerning miracles in the Gospel of John, it can be noticed that Bultmann has closely approached the spirit of allegorization, which is exemplary of what he has done elsewhere in demythologizing.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 37.

⁸⁵ Rudolf Bultmann, Essays Philosophical and Theological (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), p. 142.

. . . the miracles of Jesus . . . are pictures, symbols. . . . the bread-miracle (6:1-15), the cure of the blind man (9:1-7), and the raising of Lazarus (11:1-44) have specific symbolic meaning: they represent the Revelation as food, light, and life, respectively. . . .⁸⁶

George Ernest Wright

The second individual who has been chosen to represent the neo-orthodox application of hermeneutical principles to Scripture is George Ernest Wright. Wright's main field of work is in the Old Testament, from which he has derived his main principle of biblical interpretation. Just as Bultmann's demythologizing is his hermeneutical tool, so too Wright has a hermeneutical instrument, that of the recitals of the acts of God recorded in the Old Testament.

As a neo-orthodox theologian. A study of George Ernest Wright's works has revealed to this writer that he definitely is not of the traditional conservative theological persuasion. Nor does this writer believe that he can be "categorized" as a theologian of the classic liberal view of thought. Wright at times is quite critical of the classic liberal position, as is evidenced in an article he wrote for Theology Today entitled "Interpreting the Old Testament."⁸⁷ Not being of either the conservative school of thought or the liberal school of thought it is this writer's contention that he is within the neo-orthodox theological position. By his criticism of liberalism it is clear he would not place himself with the liberal camp. Yet by his acceptance

⁸⁶ Rudolf Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, trans, Kendrick Grobel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), II, p. 44.

⁸⁷ George Ernest Wright, "Interpreting the Old Testament," Theology Today III (July, 1946), pp. 177-185.

of much of the liberal critical teachings it is evident that he would not place himself under the conservative category either. He has classed himself when he wrote that ". . . In the popular parlance of this country a person who is neither of these [either a fundamentalist or a liberal] is usually classed as 'neo-orthodox.'"⁸⁸ It appears to be generally accepted that the "popular parlance" of at least this country is that Wright belongs to those of the neo-orthodox group.

Theology as recital. It is Wright's scholarly aim to produce what he feels to be a "biblical" theology. If one phrase could be used which would sum up and cover his entire endeavor towards a realization of his goal, it would be the phrase "theology as recital." His entire system of thought is ultimately derived from the basic ideas which are embodied in this identifying expression.⁸⁹ The importance of this phrase can be realized when it is seen that the content of ideas involved in it form Wright's entire principles of hermeneutics.⁹⁰

The expression "theology as recital" denotes Wright's persuasion that the Bible relates a confessional recital of the redemptive acts of God, which acts are His true revelation. "Theology as recital" is primarily a concern with history in which God has acted in and through His chosen nation, Israel. It has been his firm conviction that in and through these acts God has clearly

⁸⁸George Ernest Wright, "World Council of Churches and Biblical Interpretation," Interpretation, III (January, 1949), p. 58.

⁸⁹George Ernest Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital (Longbank Works, Alva, Britain: Robert Cunningham and Sons Ltd., 1956), p. 38.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 64.

revealed Himself and His will for mankind; revelation has taken place in His mighty redemptive acts of history.

In his view of revelation Wright has maintained that it cannot be expressed in the form of dogmatic propositions. That is, the Bible cannot be systematized into theological statements; God has not given direct revelation through the means of inspiration to the writers of Scripture, therefore it cannot be propositionally stated. In his theology it is believed that revelation has taken place only through one medium of God's acts in history. Whatever conclusions about God and man are formed are not to be made by deriving propositional statements from ideas stated in Scripture. Instead they are to be inferred from the events of God's works in history which are stated in confessional recitals in Scripture. To form a biblical theology by propositional statements is to attempt to make the Bible speak a language which is foreign to it, and is to impose categories on the Bible which do not exist, and thus not allow the Bible to speak in its natural manner.⁹¹ To attempt to treat doctrines systematically, such as the doctrine of man, is to formalize the dynamic movement of the Bible into a rational paradox, such as can be found in Calvinistic views as opposed to Arminian positions, in which the mind tries to resolve conflicts by taking one side or the other. The active, vital and living relationship of man to God can only be depicted by narration. Therefore, to Wright, to systematize biblical statements is to turn doctrine into universal, abstract, and impersonal rationalism.⁹² Apart from inferences of the actions of God in the past, biblical truth about God and man cannot be

⁹¹Wright, "Wherein Lies the Unity of the Bible?," *op. cit.*, p. 195.

⁹²Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-93.

found. Revelation is discovered in God's acts, not in propositions.

History. From the above, it is evident that history plays a major role in Wright's hermeneutics. It is the starting point of his methodology. Its importance lies in the fact that it is the chief medium of revelation.⁹³ He is persuaded that history has proven to be the primary means whereby God has communicated His will and purpose to man. These acts are found as having begun in the Old Testament in its recital of the various redemptive acts of God in history, but not completed or fulfilled until the Word became Flesh in the New Testament. Therefore the Bible is not primarily the Word of God, but rather the record of the acts of God, together with the human response made to these acts.⁹⁴

In theology as recital Wright has maintained that the Old Testament is primarily concerned with the history of God's redemptive acts in and through His Chosen People.⁹⁵ The Bible's peculiar interest in history distinguishes it more than any other thing from other religious literature. This historical interest is to be seen in the biblical records of confessional recitals by Israel in its worship.⁹⁶ These confessions of faith which were used in Israelite worship were nearly all recitals of what God had done in historical redemptive events. Such a kerygmatic theme can be found to be at the base of the first six books of the Old Testament.⁹⁷ This kerygma, centering

⁹³Ibid., p. 13. ⁹⁴Ibid., p. 107.

⁹⁵George Ernest Wright, The Old Testament Against Its Environment (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1950), p. 72.

⁹⁶Wright, "Wherein Lies the Unity of the Bible?," op. cit., p. 195.

⁹⁷George E. Wright, "The Old Testament: A Bulwark of the Church Against

in the narratives of the great saving acts of God in history, is believed to be the very core of the Old Testament.⁹⁸ These events of God have been influential in two ways; first in determining Israel's history, and second in revealing man's response to God either by faith or rebellion when He revealed Himself in acts of history. Maintaining that his view of history is the biblical view, Wright has been persuaded that he is justified in making his hermeneutics center around these redemptive acts of God.

God's Redemptive Acts (Confessional Recital). By God's redemptive acts in history are meant events such as are seen in the choosing of the Patriarchs, the deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt (which brought about the doctrine of the election), the wandering in the wilderness, the covenant, the conquest of the land, the rule of the kings, and the culmination of God's acts in Jesus Christ. Events such as these are the main emphases of the Bible. It is through such events that God has revealed Himself. The Bible exists as a confessional recital of those events which He has performed.⁹⁹

Wright does not believe that all of the events related in the Bible are historical. Some are myths, though he by no means believes that the Bible is so completely full of myths as does Bultmann. The main acts of the Bible are not myths to Wright, but are absolutely factual, historical events. He has contended that in biblical faith everything depends upon the actual his-

Paganism," The International Review of Missions, XL (July, 1951), p. 275.

⁹⁸Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital, op. cit., p. 76.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 85.

toricity of the central events, upon their having occurred in time-history. He is persuaded that it makes a great difference as to whether or not the central themes of the Bible have happened, themes such as the exodus, the covenant and the life and death of Christ. These events are historical despite the fact that biblical criticism has discovered errors and discrepancies in the Bible. The reason why Wright so strongly insists upon the actuality of these themes is that to claim that they are mythical and not historical would lead to a docetic view of Scripture.¹⁰⁰

Events such as the creation story of the universe and of man and of the fall of man are not to be taken as literal historic events. Nevertheless they relate crisis experiences of man's history which teach central elements of the Israelite faith. For instance, in these stories can be evidenced the plight of man. The toil and sufferings of mankind are seen as a result of man's disobedience in the fall. And, Wright has claimed, even in these stories which may have no historical basis, God's activity can be seen. In stories such as that of the creation, the fall, and the flood can be seen God's struggle with the recalcitrant will of man in His effort to bring order into the creature's chaotic soul and society.¹⁰¹

Central event — the election. The first and primary event of all the acts of God recorded in Scripture is what God has done in the election of Israel.¹⁰² Apart from the event of the election there can be no real under-

¹⁰⁰Ibid., pp. 126-127.

¹⁰¹George Ernest Wright, The Challenge of Israel's Faith (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1944), pp. 20-22.

¹⁰²Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital, op. cit., p. 113.

standing of the Old Testament nor of the entire history of Israel.¹⁰³

How did the doctrine of election come into existence? It simply arose as the natural explanation of a historical fact. Israel had been taken captive into Egypt and there served as slaves. They were an oppressed, minority group. However, they were delivered through God's leadership by the human instrumentality of Moses. This event, to the Israelite, was nothing short of miraculous and an exhibition of Divine grace. By this act of unexplainable, unmerited grace the Israelites were drawn into a special relationship with God. From this act of God the inferences were drawn that for some unknown reason, God had set His love on this defenseless group of Israelites and had chosen them for His own people. From this then was gleaned the doctrine of the Chosen People, the election.

Wright has considered the principle involved in the election of Israel to be the "key" toward an understanding of the Old Testament and the Israelite faith.¹⁰⁴ This event has served both to interpret history which happened before the exodus and history which followed the election.¹⁰⁵ The doctrine of election became the medium whereby inferences were drawn from the acts of God. These inferences gave a peculiar meaning to the nation Israel. It was this principle which the prophets used in their prophecy. For their "thus saith the Lord" they drew inferences from both past and present acts of God.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³Wright, "Interpreting the Old Testament," op. cit., p. 187.

¹⁰⁴Wright, The Old Testament Against Its Environment, op. cit., pp.49-50.

¹⁰⁵Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital, op. cit., p. 55.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 83.

Once such an inference was made, it was inevitable that those who collected and edited the earliest traditions of Israel should portray all history in this light. . . .¹⁰⁷ Wright has stated that after the election some writers, using oral traditions existing for years among these people, re-created history prior to the exodus and extended time back to the very beginning of the world, using the same principle involved in the election.¹⁰⁸

While implicitly referring to the doctrine of election Wright said that ". . . At least as early as the tenth or ninth centuries Israel's oral traditions were collected and re-written to provide a viewpoint by which all history was comprehended. . . ."¹⁰⁹ Out of this literature grew the Hexateuch.¹¹⁰ That viewpoint of common understanding was taken from the fact of the election which served as a base for the interpretation of both the past acts of God and His future events. The election is the foundation upon which Wright has placed his theological structure, and upon which his entire system of hermeneutics has been built.

In another section of this paper this interpretative principle has been exhibited as Wright has applied it to events both preceding, and subsequent to, the election.

The Covenant. The election of Israel was made concrete in terms of

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 50-51.

¹⁰⁸ Wright, "The Old Testament: A Bulwark of the Church Against Paganism," op. cit., p. 275.

¹⁰⁹ Wright, The Old Testament Against Its Environment, op. cit., p. 54.

¹¹⁰ Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital, op. cit., pp. 72-76.

the covenant. In this event the implications of the election were confirmed and clarified; it was an expression of this great grace of God in social and political terms by means of covenant and theocracy. The original compact which was made between God and Israel is believed to have been that covenant made at Sinai during the wilderness period. The covenant involved the recognition of God as their sole Lord and Ruler and of their promise to Him that they would be obedient to His revealed law, the summary of which was the Decalogue.

The covenant represented the Israelite meaning of existence. It gave solid expression of a divine-human society. It helped to proclaim the nature of God and the meaning of human existence. It showed what God expected and how man responded. Man frequently broke the covenant and learned that under its rule the nature of God's activity was conditioned by the nature of man's response to the covenant obligations. Unable to keep the covenant, it was implied by inferences of God's activity that there would one day be established another covenant, which, through God's work of redemption, would transform individuals and enable them to keep the new covenant.

The value of the covenant concept for Wright's hermeneutics lies in the fact of its incompleteness, pointing to a future event. This incompleteness was seen in the light of the activity of God which resulted from man's negative response to his covenantal obligations. It was Israel's conviction that God was still working and would bring to perfection that which had proven to be imperfect. Though Wright has nowhere stated it, insofar as this writer has discovered, he undoubtedly would claim that the prophet Jeremiah, having surveyed the historical and contemporary acts of God, and saw man's disobe-

dience to his covenant vows, was led to declare that God was yet to act, and to give man a covenant which he would be able to keep and obey (Jeremiah 31: 31-34). The incompleteness of the old covenant is seen in that it illumined the meaning of subsequent history¹¹¹ yet to be fulfilled.

Interpretation as inferences from God's acts. Before stating Wright's method of unifying the Bible by showing its fulfillment to lie in God's supreme act of Christ, his main hermeneutical method has been first more clearly stated.

As previously stated, it was by such events as the exodus, the election, the wondering in the wilderness, the giving of the promised land, et cetera, that God was seen as acting redemptively for the nation Israel.

Wright has insisted that the Israelites viewed these events of God through eyes of faith. The Israelites did more than just witness the great redemptive acts which happened to them as a nation. By faith Israel saw the hand of God revealed. It was by this firm conviction, this inner persuasion, that Israel contended certain truths could be discovered. Therefore Israel began interpreting and explaining these events which led to the establishment of its nation. Certain facts and principles were discovered and inferences were made which not only enabled Israel to interpret its present situation, but also enabled her to put the puzzle of time together in a coherent whole. Thus Israel was able to look back upon history, and through its knowledge of the divine election was able to interpret the whole Patriarchal period and see how God had been fulfilling his promises made to Abraham. Events which

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 55.

happened subsequent to the election were also interpreted in the light of the election. Centuries later it could be seen through such interpretation how the history from Moses to David marked various stages of God's fulfilling His promises, the climactic fulfillment being seen in Jesus Christ. This understanding and grasp of the movement of history as God's acts and intervention was possible to Israel only because, by faith, she interpreted these events by drawing inferences from them.

. . . Because God was Lord, each fact and event had a promise and a future implied in it; each held a preview of a saving event which one day would be complete. Thus all is in movement, affairs go on, and from them arises fulfillment or the promise of yet greater things to come. .
 . . .¹¹²

As already mentioned, the nature of God and man are not to be discovered by a systematizing of material found in Scripture. Instead the doctrines of God and of man are inferences which are to be made from events. God is to be known as He is by what He has done, and the biblical doctrine of man is known from his response to that which God has done in his revealing acts. From events God can be seen to be a God of love or wrath, justice or judgment, mercy or anger. Thus the so-called attributes of God are not derived by an analysis of statements concerning His Being and then stating them in abstract, propositional form. Instead God is known as He is by an analysis of history, and a drawing of logical inferences and conclusions from a realization of how He has acted in past and present situations. From this man has a means of determining how God will also act in the future under similar conditions and circumstances.

¹¹²George Ernest Wright, "The Unity of the Bible," Scottish Journal of Theology, VIII (December, 1955), p. 342.

Just as God is known by His acts in the past and present, so biblical man is discovered by the response which he has made to those events in which God has acted. Thus the biblical interest in man is not in his nature, but rather in what he has done, for what he has done is understood as his response to God's acts. It is difficult to speak of a biblical doctrine of man therefore unless this doctrine is conceived in terms of theology as recital.¹¹³ God's act is always a challenge to decision and commitment on the part of man. It is man's response which portrays what man really is and reveals the condition of his inner state. Thus it can be seen that knowledge of man cannot be seen apart from knowledge of God, for involved is a relationship between two parties, God and man. Man's knowledge of his own nature is gained as he realizes what God expects and demands, as inferred from His acts, and sees how he has either responded in faith or disobedience. Thus the Israelitish eye was trained to take human events seriously, because in them God was acting, and through them was to be learned what God was doing and what His will for man involved.

It is without question that if these events are to be correctly interpreted, God must also provide the adequate means of interpretation. Wright has maintained that God has provided for this interpretation in His Word by chosen heralds or messengers.¹¹⁴ It is by means of human agents through which God provides each event with an accompanying Word of interpretation, and therefore the Word of interpretation becomes an integral part of the event,

¹¹³Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital, op. cit., pp. 90-91.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 107.

and both together serve as a guide to the understanding of future events.¹¹⁵

In Wright's view of revelation, no revelation takes place apart from God's objective redemptive activity. God does not directly reveal Himself to the consciousness of man with the intervention of time-events. However, through such events God does speak to the consciousness of man. By various ways he reaches the inner consciousness and thus presents an interpretation of these events to his chosen interpreters. This is the accompanying Word of interpretation. Thus they are enabled to make correct inferences from these events. This, Wright has maintained, puts revelation on an objective and not a subjective basis.¹¹⁶ This principle is brought out in what Wright has said about the prophets in the following paragraph.

. . . They were not teachers of general religious truth; they were the heralds of God, and their 'Thus saith the Lord' explained God's intention and meaning in the events of their day. The source of their enlightenment was not from mystical experience but from history itself and from the character and purpose of God revealed in both past and present. . . . The Word which came to them interpreted events, and they were not concerned to deal publicly with their experience. The work of God which they expounded was more objective; it was exterior to that with which mystical experience customarily deals.¹¹⁷

There is a point on revelation which Wright is not too definite, and that is whether or not the revelation the prophets received enabled them to predict future events before they happened. There are instances where one could imply that Wright has felt that they were enabled to foretell events yet to happen. However, to this writer's knowledge he nowhere definitely has stated this to be a fact. In other instances, in the sources consulted for this study, he has implied that they could not predict events before they

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 84.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 55.

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 83.

transpired, even though the biblical record, taken literally, would teach they could and did truly prophesy events yet-to-be. Wright apparently does not believe that such takes place if one is to judge by how he has treated the story of Nathan predicting judgment upon David's sin of adultery. Taken literally from the Bible one would say Nathan definitely was standing at one particular period in time and referring to a future period. However, Wright maintained that this was not the case. Instead what happened was that the author wrote the reference of judgment in the light of having seen what actually did happen in David's life following his sinful deed. Thus, by seeing history as it developed, he surmised that the disaster which came in his later life was but the manifestation of God's judgment upon David's sin.¹¹⁸

In the historical acts in which God revealed Himself there were historical promises. In these acts man's attention was directed on what God had done, was now doing, and was yet to do according to His declared intention. In this sense promise and fulfillment become the central biblical themes and it is in this light that all history is interpreted.¹¹⁹ For instance, in the book of Genesis Abraham was the recipient of wonderful promises which were repeated to each of the fathers. The subsequent history from Moses to David marked the stages of God's fulfillment of these promises. Consequently, when God heard their groaning He remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exodus 2:23-24).

¹¹⁸George Ernest Wright, "Progressive Revelation," The Christian Scholar, XXXIX (March, 1956), pp. 61-65.

¹¹⁹Wright, "The Old Testament: A Bulwark of the Church Against Paganism," op. cit., p. 273.

Wright has urged that the main historical events of the Old Testament were not fulfilled under the old covenant. This is seen in the fact that the significance of an Old Testament event is to be seen from two perspectives, the one from its historical meaning, and the other from its typological meaning. The relationship between the historic event and its typology was purposely fixed by God so that the one is the continuation and fulfillment of the other.¹²⁰ The historical aspect is clearly evidenced in the Old Testament, but the latter, the typology, was not fulfilled in the Old Testament. Thus, Wright maintained that the Old Testament was incomplete in revelation, and neither Judaism nor Christianity can live in the Old Testament alone.¹²¹ As it ended with an unfulfilled hope for completion it is to the New Testament which one must turn to discover the realization of the historic events of the Old Testament. This completion is discovered in God's act of redemption in the New Testament.

The Unity of the Bible — Trinitarian exegesis. In Wright's theology the New Testament must be proclaimed as the fulfillment of the Old. Without the Old Testament the historical focus and perspective of the New Testament is lost. It cannot be adequately interpreted without the background which the Old Testament provides. The Old Testament by itself does not present a faith by which men today can live, and the New Testament, in and by itself, is an insufficient base upon which to stand. The entire Bible, both the Old and the New Testament, must be seen as one coherent whole with the New Testa-

¹²⁰Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital, op. cit., p. 65

¹²¹Wright, The Old Testament Against Its Environment, op. cit., p. 75.

ment completing the Old. Only then can God's activity in Jesus Christ, His acts and events of redemption, be comprehended.¹²²

The activity of God, as evidenced in history, is to Wright the unifying principle of the Bible.¹²³ The key to this unity, this activity of God, is Jesus Christ.¹²⁴ Christ is the key because it is in Him that the activity of God in the Old Testament, the election, the exodus, the wilderness wandering, the covenant, and other such acts, find their fulfillment and completion. Because Christ is the key to understanding the activity of God's acts of redemption in the past, He is therefore the key, in Wright's hermeneutics, which unlocks the unfulfilled events of the Old Testament and shows their fulfillment in the New Testament. Only as the Bible is seen in the main historical event of God's activity, Jesus Christ, can it be seen as a coherent whole.

In the past the unity of the Bible in Christ has been demonstrated by the use of "Christological" exegesis and "typology." Both of these expressions aim at putting forth the fact that since Christ is the Lord of both Testaments, His Word is to be found in both books. Wright however has preferred to do away with the use of these terms and to substitute another, that of "Trinitarian" exegesis, thus indicating a new approach towards interpreting the unity of the Bible, although involving the same theme as Chris-

¹²² Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital, op. cit., pp. 15-32.

¹²³ George Ernest Wright, "Neo-Orthodoxy and the Bible," The Journal of Bible and Religion, XIV (May, 1946), p. 90.

¹²⁴ Alan Richardson and W. Schweitzer (editors), Biblical Authority For Today (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1951), p. 226.

tology and typology, that of discovering the relationship of the two Testaments one to the other. The main reason why Wright prefers to disuse the terms referred to is due to the fact that throughout Christian history the Old Testament has been frequently distorted by finding in every stick and stone an allusion to Christ.¹²⁵

Concerning Trinitarian exegesis, Wright has stated the following:

. . . this writer . . . would prefer to abandon the conception of "Christological" exegesis entirely in favor of a "Trinitarian" exegesis. Not that the doctrine of the Trinity is to be found in the Old Testament, but that this doctrine provides the clue to interpretation and prevents the oversimplification involved in the term "Christological." As the doctrine of the Trinity reveals a complexity in the Godhead, so also it necessitates a complexity in exegetical method. Thus God the Father and God the Holy Spirit may speak in parts of Scripture where the Son is not explicitly present, even though all exegesis will ultimately lead us to the Son. . . .¹²⁶

If . . . the true meaning of Christ can be grasped only within the context of the Trinity, then we have made at least one step forward in our search for valid hermeneutical principles. When in a trinitarian context we say that Christ is the Lord of the Old Testament, we do not infer the necessity of, nor are we compelled to use, Christological allegory or typology in interpreting the Old Testament. Instead, we are asserting that Christ shows us the true meaning of what God was doing with the Chosen People, Israel, because we see the end to which all was leading. Thus the initial and intervening steps in the history do not lose their meaning for us, but instead are given new significance because the end provides the key to their intended direction. One cannot set up route markers along a road until he knows what the route is. Christ is the destination and at the same time the guide to the true understanding of the Old Testament.¹²⁷

The basic principle which underlies Wright's "Trinitarian" exegesis appears to be simply interpreting the mighty acts of God as recorded in the

¹²⁵George Ernest Wright, "The Bible in the World Council of Churches," Religion in Life, XX (Spring, 1951), p. 217.

¹²⁶Ibid., pp. 217-218.

¹²⁷Richardson and Schweitzer, op. cit., p. 228.

Old Testament as having been culminated and fulfilled in the greatest of God's acts, Jesus Christ. Wright illustrates this by saying that when the Jew reads the Old Testament he seeks for law in the first five books of the Old Testament. The Prophets and the Writings are read solely as a commentary on the Torah. Thus the Jew is led toward a legalistic and static approach to the Old Testament. The Christian, however, with Christ as his guide, makes a radically different approach to the Old Testament. In the Pentateuch the Christian does not search for law, but rather he focuses his attention on the mighty acts of God as narrated in a certain and specific history. He finds in these acts their inevitable culmination in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus he finds the formation of a new ecclesia, and discovers the New Israel under the new covenant. The poetic and prophetic books are also seen to be more than a commentary on the Law, as they are discovered to be an integral part of the revelation of God and of the people's response to this revelation in that one history previously given.¹²⁸

Essentially, then, what is involved in Wright's concept of Trinitarian exegesis is the belief that the revelation which God had made to Israel in various events was completed in Jesus Christ. It is the conviction that God has been directing the events of biblical time and that in the act of the incarnation in Jesus Christ the former period was brought to completion and the new age of the new covenant inaugurated. Consequently the old covenant is to be seen as preparation and promise, whereas, through Christ, the new covenant is to be viewed as completion and fulfillment. To take history in

¹²⁸Ibid., pp. 228-229.

this sense is to realize that the events of the Old Testament were meant by God to be preparatory events which had an inner significance which, by the original participants were only partially understood, but were to be fully comprehended in the new covenant under Jesus Christ.¹²⁹

Criticism of Wright's Hermeneutical Principles. The primary purpose of this critical evaluation is to appraise Wright's hermeneutical method, and not his theological assumptions which have been referred to in this paper. Revelation and history are referred to in this section only because of their direct tie-in with Wright's hermeneutical principles.

One fine and much needed emphasis which Wright has made is his insistence upon the unity of the Bible. Evangelicalism can rejoice in the note of relevancy which Wright has trumpeted for the use and value of the Old Testament in today's theology. He has firmly maintained that it must be interpreted along with the New Testament, and thus have one whole continuous book. He pleads for an end to the present situation in which scholars divide the Old and the New Testaments into two individual compartments, and treat each as possessing separate individual theologies, which he has claimed they do not possess. In doing this he has very favorably called attention to the binding center of both Testaments, Jesus Christ. Both Testaments are thus to be interpreted as a whole through God's climactic act, that of the incarnated Son. By this unity Wright insists that every single passage must be seen in the entire context of the whole Bible before it can be maintained that the

¹²⁹Wright, God Who Acts: Biblical Theology as Recital, op. cit., pp. 62-65.

central meaning has been grasped.¹³⁰

Wright's thesis that revelation is to be found in the activity of God is not a new idea, although his emphasis on this particular theme is refreshing since it has been a neglected aspect of the doctrine of revelation. Those of more conservative views than possessed by Wright would not hesitate to affirm that God does reveal Himself and His will through His actions. However, they would go much further than does Wright, and it is at this point that this writer criticizes Wright. In maintaining that revelation only takes place in the acts of God he completely denies the more conservative view that God also reveals Himself directly, without the means of events, to the conscience and consciousness of those whom he inspires. The bearing which this has upon hermeneutics, in the light of his total view of revelation and history, is that the Bible cannot be interpreted in the least degree propositionally. The method of finding revelation through the activity of God is objected to by Edward T. Ramsdell of Garrett Biblical Institute. Ramsdell claimed that Wright is not logical in his approach. Logically, he has claimed, an understanding of the being of God and some reasons for believing in Him must precede any fuller learning about Him.¹³¹ Full revelation requires more than merely an interpretation of the activity of God. It also demands that ideas about Him be set forth propositionally.

Ramsdell has raised another relevant criticism of Wright's method of hermeneutics when he asked the question, "Are all of Israel's interpretations

¹³⁰Wright, "The Bible in the World Council of Churches," op. cit., p. 221

¹³¹Edward T. Ramsdell, Book View on George Ernest Wright's God Who Acts, The Journal of Bible and Religion, XXII (April, 1954), pp. 131-132.

of her history equally valid? To what criteria are we to appeal?" He implied that there is no valid criteria Wright uses to govern Israel's interpretations to guarantee valid, truthful inferences.¹³² To this Wright, no doubt, would reply that he has an objective criteria, which is objective historical acts; and that the interpretations given to these events are equally valid, he might reply that God has given a Word of interpretation with each event. Yet in this writer's judgment it is extremely easy to realize that Wright's criteria would be more subjective than he would care to admit, for even though the act itself is objective, when this act is conceptualized and inferences drawn from it, then the subjective element cannot but come out, and then how can it be maintained that all the interpretations would be equally valid?

Ramsdell further implied that to deal only with the Bible as a recital of redemptive acts of God is not to show a complete desire for truth in all of its critical aspects, as truth must also characterize both systematic theology and Christian philosophy,¹³³ which Wright avoids.

A final, and concluding criticism which this writer has felt justifiable is the fact that due to Wright's view of history he can, of his own free will, determine what shall and shall not be considered as actual, historic events having occurred within time. By beginning with the doctrine of the election as central he thus determines those events which must be literally interpreted to give this idea relevance as an event of fulfillment of past promises; those events which are not necessary to his scheme of thinking he is free to state are not literal events which took place in time. The question

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

which this writer raises is not if it is valid for Wright to do this from his own theological premises. The question is, does his method find biblical support for deciding that some are historically true, but others are not actual events which happened in time? It is the persuasion of this writer that the choice of what is factual historic events and what is not has no Scriptural basis but is purely subjectively decided upon.

III. CRITICISM OF NEO-ORTHODOX HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES

Two leading neo-orthodox theologians, Rudolf Bultmann and George Ernest Wright, have already received criticism concerning their hermeneutical principles which they have applied to Scripture. Much of what has been said of each of these theologians in these criticisms of their methods of interpretation could be said of neo-orthodox hermeneutical principles in general.

Through the study which has been presented in this paper, especially the sections dealing with Bultmann and Wright, this writer has become aware of what he considers to be the major area of weakness in neo-orthodox exposition of the Bible. This area is that of extreme subjectivism.

Neo-orthodoxy has no objective authority. Its view of revelation and inspiration has demanded that it cast away the belief that the Bible is the divinely revealed, authoritative revelation of God. It was the destruction of the authority of Scripture, this writer contends, which threw open the door of subjectivism in the hermeneutical principles of neo-orthodoxy. Thus men such as Bultmann and Wright have developed their own system of interpretation. Gordon D. Kaufman has pointed out that as a result of removing

authority from Scripture the interpreter has become involved in affirming the authority of his own interpretations of God's acts instead.¹³⁴

This subjectivism is evidenced in the crisis theologians' belief that the Bible is not revelation but contains, or witnesses to, revelation. Scripture becomes revelation, in portions, only when God speaks or encounters the reader and man responds, subjectively, by faith. As previously stated, what may become authoritative for one interpreter may not be so for another, and then it may not be revelation tomorrow when read again unless this same subjective encounter repeats itself. Concerning this matter George Turner has said:

. . . The interpreter is compelled to select the inspired and authoritative utterances in the Bible from those which are uninspired, unauthoritative and erroneous. Unfortunately the student is left with no norm or touchstone by which to make this selection. The typical neo-orthodox student is of necessity subjective in his value-judgments. This means that the final authority is not in the Bible itself but in the 'existential moment' in the Bible reader, that moment when he is confronted with the presence of God speaking through his written Word. This means that the Bible does not possess within itself a self-authenticating quality; its authentication is dependent upon the reader's response, a subjective validation. . . . The neo-orthodox view would say that there is . . . no Word of God in the Bible unless the reader-auditor responds to its stimulus. . . .¹³⁵

This subjectivism is seen in the fact that wherever Brunner and Barth find higher critical and scientific objections to certain portions of the Bible, in these portions the Spirit is silent. Only those sections of Scripture can become the Word of God which are consistent with the presuppositions of the neo-supernaturalists.¹³⁶ The exegesis which would follow any portion

¹³⁴Kaufman, "The Ground of Biblical Authority: Six Thesis," op. cit., p. 30.

¹³⁵Turner, op. cit., p. 23.

¹³⁶Henry, The Protestant Dilemma, op. cit., p. 84.

of Scripture would thus be stigmatized from the beginning by controlling pre-suppositional factors.

As a result of such subjectiveness neo-orthodoxy does not present a uniform interpretation of the mighty acts of God.¹³⁷ This is due to the fact that each interpreter is free to put his own construction on these acts, and through this means divine propositional revelation is replaced by human insights.¹³⁸

Certainly it cannot be stated that the existentialists are wrong in their insistence that God has revealed Himself in historical acts. However, this writer is of the opinion that these acts are not to be interpreted in a subjective manner as do the crisis theologians. This writer is of the opinion that God has given an interpretation of these acts in propositional, doctrinal statements. Both acts and interpretation are recorded in Scripture. An example of this would be Peter's interpretation in Acts chapter two and fifteen of what happened in God's act of the giving of the Holy Spirit recorded in Acts 2:1-4.

. . . A truly revelatory situation . . . is one in which God not only does something, but interprets what he does; not only acts, but speaks in, with and through the acts. That is to say, revelation moves in the dimension of personal encounter. The writers of Scripture not only saw what God did and (by faith) what he would do, but they also heard his 'still small voice,' by which he made known to them his secret.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Kantzer, "The Method of Revelation: How Does God Reveal Himself?," op. cit., p. 221.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 227.

¹³⁹ Carl F.H. Henry (ed), Revelation and the Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), p. 52.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

I. SUMMARY

In this paper an attempt has been made to show how the three leading schools of theological thought, conservatism, liberalism, and neo-orthodoxy apply their individual principles of hermeneutics to the Scriptures. Each of the three schools were discussed in the mentioned order.

The hermeneutical principles of the conservative school were seen to be geared largely toward discovering the literal truth of Scripture. As has been shown, this does not mean that this school interprets the Bible literalistically in all of its statements, though at times such may be necessary. It was shown that there is much language in Scripture which is figurative, and therefore cannot receive a literalistic interpretation. It was discussed that the object of interpretation, even in figurative language, is to discover the literal truth it conveys. It was pointed out that conservative hermeneutics are controlled by its belief in the Bible as being the infallible and divinely revealed Word of God.

In searching for the literal truth, conservative exegetes rely heavily upon the Grammatico-historical method of interpretation, which is briefly an interpretation of the language of Scripture as is required by the laws of grammar and the facts of history. Along with this discussion various methods of interpretation, which this writer believed to be erroneous, were discussed as a means of comparison and contrast.

Liberalism, it was shown, has no definite form of hermeneutical

principles as does conservatism. Reason, based on human experience, is the final court of appeal in the interpretation of the Scriptural ideas and doctrines. It attempts to interpret the Bible by redefining its major ideas in the light of contemporary religious experience, and to discard whatever ideas may be inconsistent with reason and experience. Holding to the evolutionary doctrine of development, it was pointed out that liberalism believes that doctrine is still developing, and therefore interpretation of Scripture can never be absolute and final in its exegesis. Due to its concept of revelation and inspiration liberalism has been shown to be free of any hermeneutical restrictions. The Bible, held to be a fallible and non-authoritative book, is interpreted as is any other book.

The main hermeneutical principle of neo-orthodoxy has been discussed as being that of existentialism. This method involves an interpretation of Scripture which is governed by man and his existence. It is geared toward an understanding of how it involves man in a personal, intimate manner. Propositional statements, doctrines of faith, are not to be the object of interpretation. Two men were used to illustrate the application of neo-orthodoxy's hermeneutical principles to the Scripture, Rudolf Bultmann and George Ernest Wright. The former has emphasized the need of demythologizing the Scriptures, and thus arrive at the heart of the Gospel, the kerygma. The latter has expressed the belief that conclusions about God and man are to be formed from an interpretation of the way in which God has revealed himself in events of history as recorded in confessional recitals of the Bible. The object of both men in their hermeneutical approach to the Bible is to produce an existential understanding of Scriptural ideas and teachings.

A brief study of the history of hermeneutics was made. The object of this research was to show how both correct and incorrect hermeneutical principles have been used in the past, and to see how wrong principles have produced erroneous exegetical results. This has also provided a background for an understanding of the three schools presented in this paper.

Throughout this paper it has been accepted as an established fact that the concept of Scripture which is held will largely determine the hermeneutical principles applied to the Bible. As was shown, each of the three views has a different concept of Scripture. The relationship of each individual concept to hermeneutical principles was shown, and it was discovered that the concept of the Bible strongly effected the principles of interpretation of each school.

This writer attempted to establish a basis on which to decide whether or not there was a proper, or correct, concept of the Bible. He sought an objective source for such proof, which source he stated to be the Bible itself. The proper concept of the Bible was determined on the Scriptural testimony as to its own character. Having discovered the biblical view of its own nature, it was the persuasion of this writer that one had thus arrived at what was the proper concept of Scripture. This concept was then made the standard by which the conservative, liberal, and neo-orthodox concepts were to be measured and judged. Only by this means was there believed to be an objective standard which could determine if or not any of the three views maintained the proper concept of Scripture.

II. CONCLUSION

It was concluded that the standard which the Bible sets for itself is that Scripture is the divinely revealed and authoritative Word of God. This

is the concept which it maintains of itself.

All three views were compared to the above concept of Scripture. It was determined that liberalism's concept of Scripture, and neo-orthodoxy's concept of Scripture, was not the same as the biblical concept of the Bible. The conservative position, however, was discovered to maintain the biblical concept of itself.

The logical conclusion was that, if the concept one holds of Scripture largely determines the principles one applies to Scripture, and if there is a proper concept and also improper concepts, then there are also proper and improper principles which can be applied to the interpretation of the Bible. This being true then it would follow that only by maintaining the proper concept of the Bible could the correct hermeneutical principles be applied to its interpretation. Thus since only the conservative view of the three theological schools of thought maintains the biblical concept of Scripture, it alone can apply correct hermeneutical principles to the interpretation of the Bible.

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